

Suburbia, seaside and sensation: showing films in
London and the south-east,

1896 – 1897

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Abstract

The study of film exhibition has become increasingly important in researching and interpreting the silent film period. In this context, it is crucial to understand how the British film-going experience emerged, laying the foundations for one of the key leisure pursuits of the twentieth century and beyond. This thesis examines a fascinating and distinct moment in the history of silent film. The resilience of films as an occasional form of entertainment during the first two years of commercial exhibition was due, in part, to the sensational aspects of the new medium, and to the activities of a range of travelling showmen and lanternists. The role of such individuals in suburban areas has been largely overlooked, while the role of the music hall and the frequency of film shows in this period have been overstated. I seek to redress this by showing that films arrived outside of large urban areas in a variety of settings, with lanternists occupying a crucial role.

By employing an empirical and systematic methodological framework, I offer a new perspective by means of detailed case studies chronicling the exhibition of films in the suburban towns of Croydon, Ealing and Woolwich between 1896 and 1897. Focussing so precisely on the first two years of commercial exhibition enables a comprehensive study of the initial impact of the cinematograph and how film exhibition was working in that period. By means of a fourth case study, I re-appraise and re-position the role of lanternists and show the importance of these entrepreneurs in terms of film exhibition and their impact on the suburban London landscape. I also consider the broader theme of Sensation and how it relates to the film-going experience in this period.

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Author's Declaration

I certify that to the best of my knowledge and belief, all of the work contained in this thesis is my own, except where sources are cited. No portion of this thesis has been previously published or submitted for any other examination.

INTRODUCTION

On a stormy Monday afternoon in October 1896, hundreds of eager Croydonians queued to witness the inaugural performance at the National Palace of Varieties in Croydon.¹ The excitement would have been palpable as the ‘audience filled the building to overflowing’² in expectation of a special matinee programme, including turns from well-known married performers Ellaline Terriss and Seymour Hicks, as well as the leading variety entertainer Dan Leno. The programme included the ‘Theatrograph’ which was advertised in the local press as ‘The Biggest Sensation of the Century!’³ and was sure to entice a curious audience for the evening performance. Robert W. Paul’s Theatrograph was a film projector (or cinematograph) capable of showing ‘animated photographs’ (short films) on a screen for an audience to view in a variety of instructional or entertainment settings. Paul hailed from London and his background was in the electrical engineering field where he specialised in making scientific and electrical instruments. He is, however, perhaps best known as a pioneer in the British film business.

In America in 1894 Thomas Edison began to commercially market his latest invention the ‘Kinetoscope’, which was a coin-operated peep-hole device capable of showing an animated photograph of about thirty seconds in length. Later that year Paul was approached by two Greek entrepreneurs who had opened a Kinetoscope parlour in London, and who wanted to source additional (lower-priced) copies of the machines. Paul had the technical ability to replicate the apparatus, and he was not hampered by a patent as Edison, somewhat remissly, had not patented the Kinetoscope in Europe. Paul quickly saw the advantage of manufacturing the apparatus for his own commercial interests, but realised he would have to bypass Edison films which were protected under copyright. Paul joined forces with Birt Acres, a photographic expert, and they produced a camera which was ready to begin filming in early 1895. During the course of the year their collaboration ended and Acres went on to pursue his own projects in the cinematograph field.

Having successfully produced a Kinetoscope and camera, Paul’s thoughts began to turn to the possibility of screen projection. The Cinématographe-Lumière, a combined film projector and camera, was first publically exhibited in Paris in December 1895. Hot on the heels of the Lumière brothers, Paul quickly produced his own film projector, the Theatrograph, less than two months later. The Theatrograph was first publicly exhibited on 20 February 1896 at the Finsbury Technical College in London. It was soon being presented as a new form of entertainment and novelty at several venues in London from

¹ The National Palace of Varieties opened in North End, Croydon, on Monday 5 October 1896.

² *Croydon Times*, 7 October 1896, p. 5.

³ *CT*, 7 October 1896, p. 4.

March onwards, including the Alhambra and Olympia.⁴ Meanwhile, according to film historian John Barnes, whilst Paul was planning to manufacture the projector commercially he was ‘content to leave its commercial exploitation through public exhibition to others’.⁵ This was particularly feasible as the projector could be fitted and adapted to any lantern, making it an attractive proposition for lanternists and showmen.

From this juncture onwards, the conventional narrative concerning the development of the British film industry starts with the rapid appropriation of films into variety and music hall programmes as a turn or attraction at the end of the bill. Meanwhile, travelling showmen also took cinematographs to public halls and fairgrounds around the country, attracting a predominantly working-class audience. Once the potential longevity of the medium was recognised, in combination with the availability of longer film stock, we witness a transition in around 1906 towards film shows on a standalone basis taking place in shop front conversions or ‘penny gaffs’. From circa 1908 films began to find a permanent home in purpose built or converted ‘electric theatres’, predominantly for the viewing pleasure of the working-classes. The growth and development of a film-going culture and industry was to herald the eventual death-knell of the very music halls where films had first been shown. Or so the conventional story goes. It is certainly a compelling and persuasive narrative, but there are some inconsistencies. I previously researched film exhibition in Croydon, Surrey, in the period from 1896 to 1910,⁶ and my findings indicated that films were initially exhibited only infrequently in music halls, without becoming extinct or particularly established before the advent of electric theatres. In contrast to London and large metropolitan centres, such sporadic film activity in Croydon suggested that exhibition practices were operating in a different way in the suburban setting. This thesis builds on that initial research in a variety of ways.

As such, it examines a fascinating and distinct moment in the history of silent film. The evolution of projected film as an occasional form of entertainment during the first two years of commercial exhibition was due, in part, to the sensational aspects of the new medium, and to the activities of a range of travelling showmen and lanternists. The role of such individuals in suburban areas has been largely overlooked, while the role of the music hall and the frequency of film shows in this period have been overstated. I seek to redress

⁴ For a detailed listing of Theatrograph performances in London during March and April 1896, see John Barnes, *The Beginnings of the Cinema in England 1894-1901: vol. 1, 1894-1896* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998), p. 47.

⁵ Barnes, *vol. 1*, p. 108.

⁶ Amy Brooker, ‘Make ‘Em Laugh? Film Exhibition in Croydon 1896-1910’ (unpublished master’s thesis, University of East Anglia, 2001).

this by showing that animated pictures arrived outside of large urban areas in a variety of settings, with lanternists occupying a crucial role in their exhibition.

In their discussion of 'Film History and How It Is Done' Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell explain that 'historians necessarily limit the stretch of time they will explore, and they go on to divide that stretch into meaningful phases or segments'.⁷ In this vein I explore the development of a fledgling film culture during the years 1896 and 1897. I offer a new perspective by means of detailed case studies chronicling how films were shown and consumed during this period in the suburban towns of Croydon, Ealing and Woolwich. My original intention was to conduct a much broader sweep of the years 1896-1906, but upon embarking on this project it soon became clear that the richness of the very early years deserves greater depth of examination. By contracting the boundaries and focussing so precisely on such a meaningful moment in film history, I have been better able to explore and answer the research questions I sought to address. Bordwell and Thompson also posit that 'by studying how films were made and received, we discover how creators and audiences responded to their moment in history'. As well as considering the creators and audiences, it is equally important to explore the role of exhibitors and how they responded to their 'moment in history'. I re-appraise and re-position the role of lanternists in this nascent period and illuminate the significance of these entrepreneurs on the suburban and coastal landscape.

Lanternists utilised a range of venues for their exhibition purposes, many of which were intrinsically pedagogic in nature, and which were aimed at a predominantly middle-class audience. The lanternist Horace Banks was one such individual who swiftly saw the potential benefits of incorporating the cinematograph into his dioramic and lantern entertainment. I conduct a detailed case study examining his engagements in Ealing, Croydon and further afield over the course of 1896 and 1897. I construct a comprehensive picture of his exhibition practices and how they developed over the course of these two years in suburban and seaside areas. To describe the culture of film shows in this period, I use the concept the 'Cinema of Sensation', which seems a particularly germane term when taking into account the films that were shown and the way they were promoted and discussed in the press.

The systematic research I have conducted which informs this thesis is new and original, as research concerning film in Croydon, Ealing and Woolwich has tended to focus on film production or film exhibition in the context of the physical cinema building. Ealing

⁷ Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, *Film History: An Introduction*, 2nd edn (New York: McGraw Hill, 2003), p. 7.

occupies a special place in the history of cinema; it is synonymous with the Ealing Studios, which in turn conjures up images of classic post-war comedies such as *Kind Hearts and Coronets* or *The Ladykillers*.⁸ It is unsurprising then that scholarship concerning film in Ealing has focussed predominantly on the production history of the Ealing Studios.⁹ Croydon, too, had a filmmaking tradition and boasts three modest film studios that were operating at the beginning of the twentieth century: the Clarendon Film Company, Cricks and Sharp (later Cricks and Martin), and the Rosie Film Company. The rise of cinema buildings are often touched upon in general histories of Croydon, Ealing and Woolwich; Allen Eyles and Keith Skone, for instance, have written about the growth of cinemas in Croydon, focussing on cinema buildings from 1908 onwards.¹⁰ Horace Banks, one half of the Banks and Greaves partnership, has not previously been researched in any great depth, save for modest acknowledgments and biographical information.¹¹ My thesis thus fills in a number of significant gaps in the early history of film shows in the UK.

Literature review: studying film exhibition in the early silent period

My thesis is placed within the context of a body of work concerning predominantly silent film history in Britain, as well as research from further afield. Rachael Low's seminal work on the history of British film has for decades been one of the cornerstones for film scholarship, providing an overview or panorama of film making in Britain from its origins in 1896 to 1939.¹² As an eminent authority on the early history of the cinema, the more recent scholarship by John Barnes on the beginnings of cinema in Britain took an even more detailed and empirical approach covering a shorter timespan (1896-1901), making it the essential 'go-to' resource for scholars of early British film.¹³

One of the defining moments in the study of early film history must surely be the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAP) Congress which was held in Brighton in 1978, and which focussed the attention of film academics and archivists on fiction-film production from 1900 to 1906, as well as highlighting the role of Brighton as a filmmaking centre in this period. Over thirty-five years later, participants of this symposium still speak

⁸ *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. Dir. Robert Hamer. Ealing Studios. 1949; *The Ladykillers*. Dir. Alexander Mackendrick. The Rank Organisation and Ealing Studios. 1955.

⁹ Charles Barr, *Ealing Studios*, 3rd edn (Moffat: Cameron & Hollis, 1998); Mark Duguid, Lee Freeman, Keith Johnston and Melanie Williams, eds, *Ealing Revisited* (London: BFI, 2012); George Perry, *Forever Ealing: A Celebration of the Great British Film Studio* (London: Pavilion, 1981).

¹⁰ Allen Eyles and Keith Skone, *The Cinemas of Croydon* (Sutton: Keytone Publications, 1989).

¹¹ David Robinson, Stephen Herbert and Richard Crangle, eds, *Encyclopaedia of the Magic Lantern* (London: Magic Lantern Society, 2001), p. 28.; 'Individual Person Record', *Slides.uni-trier.de*, 2015 <<http://www.slides.uni-trier.de/person/index.php?id=6003064>> [accessed 29 September 2015].

¹² Rachael Low, *The History of the British Film, 1896-1939*, 5 vols. (London: Allen and Unwin, 1949-1979; London: Routledge, 1997).

¹³ John Barnes, *The Beginnings of the Cinema in England, 1894-1901*, 5 vols. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998).

of it with deference and pride (as was evident from the comments and anecdotes shared by delegates at the 2012 Domitor Conference 'Performing New Media, 1895-1915', which was also held in Brighton). And justifiably so. The 1978 symposium instigated a re-examination of early cinema and paved the way for a generation of film scholars to research this period with renewed interest and vigour by employing a revisionist approach, which in turn led to another milestone in the writing of early cinema, namely the formulation by Tom Gunning and André Gaudreault of the concept of the 'Cinema of Attractions'.¹⁴

The centenary of film in 1995 was another injection in the arm for the study of silent cinema and stimulated further research, with a perceptible shift towards the study of film exhibition, which began to step out of the shadows of film production and the textual film analysis to take centre stage. Film historians such as Nicholas Hiley, Luke McKernan, Vanessa Toulmin, Jon Burrows and Joe Kember have been at the forefront of this renaissance. Burrows examined film exhibition and the rise of fixed-site venues showing films in London post-1906.¹⁵ McKernan worked with Simon Brown on 'The London Project', a study of film businesses in London 1894-1914. The output from this study included articles and an online database of the film businesses and venues in London between 1894 and 1914.¹⁶ Hiley researched cinema building and audiences, particularly in the 1910s and 1920s.¹⁷ Kember looked at how British showmen in the late nineteenth century incorporated the cinematograph into their businesses by 'marketing modernity'.¹⁸ With a particular focus on the Edwardian period, Toulmin generated a comprehensive body of work concerning the social history of travelling showmen and the fairground.¹⁹ She was also one of the driving forces behind the impressive research project that has followed in the wake of the rediscovery of around eight-hundred local actuality films in the Mitchell and Kenyon collection, and their acquisition by the British Film Institute in 2000. The first volume to come out of this project sought to 'examine a series

¹⁴ Tom Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde', *Wide Angle*, 8:3-4 (1986), pp. 63-70.

¹⁵ See Jon Burrows, 'Penny Pleasures: Film Exhibition in London during the Nickelodeon era, 1906-1914', in *Film History*, 16.1, 2004, pp. 60-91 and 'Penny Pleasures II: Indecency, Anarchy and Junk Film in London's Nickelodeons, 1906-1914', in *Film History*, 16.2, 2004, pp. 172-197.

¹⁶ 'The London Project – Home', *Londonfilm.bbk.ac.uk*, 2015 <<http://londonfilm.bbk.ac.uk/>> [accessed 29 September 2015].

¹⁷ See Nicholas Hiley, 'Fifteen Questions about the Early Film Audience', in Daan Hertogs and Nico de Klerk, eds, *Uncharted Territory: Essays on Early Non-Fiction Film* (Amsterdam: Netherlands Film Museum, 1997), pp. 105-118 and 'The British Cinema Auditorium', in Karel Dibberts and Bert Hogenkamp, eds, *Film and the First World War* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995), pp. 160-170.

¹⁸ Joe Kember, *Marketing Modernity* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2009).

¹⁹ See Vanessa Toulmin, *Randall Williams: King of Showmen* (London: The Projection Box, 1998) and 'Telling the Tale: The History of the Fairground Bioscope Show and the Showmen Who Operated Them', in *Film History*, 6.2 (Summer 1994), pp. 219-237.

of neglected relationships between early films and producers, exhibitors and audiences, within a multi-regional rather than national metropolitan framework'.²⁰ The fact that contributors included film scholars, local historians, archivists and specialists from a range of disciplines is an indication of the manner in which film studies has changed and has become increasingly responsive to an interdisciplinary approach.

The Mitchell and Kenyon collection of non-fiction films, with their focus on the North West and Yorkshire, has also given impetus to the value of local and regional studies, an approach which has often been neglected with regards to the early silent period. Local case studies provide a valuable insight into early film exhibition and reception, and help us to better comprehend and contextualise the national picture. This is why my detailed local studies of Croydon, Ealing and Woolwich, with their inherent focus on the suburban model, are important: they challenge and redress some of the assumptions that have shaped our understanding of the development of early film exhibition.

Although local studies have been neglected, fortunately they have not been spurned completely and there have been important pockets of research which consider the local landscape. David Williams surveyed silent cinema exhibition in Durham and Leicester.²¹ David Berry researched the first hundred years of cinema in Wales.²² In the south-east of England there has been vibrant research concerning the pioneers of filmmaking in Brighton and Hove, as well as film exhibition in Brighton itself, largely through the work of Frank Gray.²³ In *The Place of the Audience: Cultural Geographies of Film Consumption*, Mark Jancovich, Lucy Faire and Sarah Stubbings address the activities of audiences and analyse the cultural consumption of film in the context of Nottingham, through the use of archival materials and ethnographic studies spanning the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries.²⁴ Peter Walsh has researched the showmanship and regional exhibition practices of Jasper Redfern, who was actively working in and around Yorkshire in the early days.²⁵ Damer Waddington has explored a century of entertainment in Jersey, by considering

²⁰ Vanessa Toulmin, Simon Popple and Patrick Russell, eds, *The Lost World of Mitchell & Kenyon: Edwardian Britain on Film* (London: BFI Publishing, 2004), p. 4.

²¹ David Williams, *Cinema in Leicester 1896-1931* (Loughborough: Heart of Albion Press, 1993) and *Cinema in a Cathedral City: Cinema Exhibition in Durham City and its environs 1896-2003* (Wakefield: Mercia Cinema Society, 2004).

²² David Berry, *Wales and Cinema: The First Hundred Years* (Cardiff: University Of Wales Press, 1996).

²³ Frank Gray, 'The Sensation of the Century: Robert Paul and Film Exhibition in Brighton in 1896/97', in *Visual Delights – Two: Exhibition and Reception*, Vanessa Toulmin and Simon Popple, eds, (Eastleigh: John Libbey Publishing, 2005), pp. 219-235; Frank Gray, *The Hove Pioneers and the Arrival of Cinema* (Brighton: University of Brighton, 1996).

²⁴ Mark Jancovich, Lucy Faire and Sarah Stubbings, *The Place Of The Audience* (London: British Film Institute, 2003).

²⁵ Peter Walsh, 'Jasper Redfern's No. 1 Vaudeville Company: Regional Exhibition Practice in Transition', *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 10.3 (2012), 273-298.

panoramas, magic lanterns and the cinema from 1814 to 1914.²⁶ In America, too, there has been the detailed study of the exhibition practices of travelling showman Lyman Howe, conducted by Charles Musser and Carol Nelson.²⁷ Greg Waller has looked at cinema in a small city in America, tracing the history of film and other leisure activities from 1896-1930.²⁸ The analysis of Manhattan nickelodeons by Robert C. Allen²⁹ and Ben Singer³⁰ also endorses the value of utilising case studies within a broader methodological framework. This is a fascinating and hugely rich and diverse body of local studies research, but by their very nature local studies are indicative of a scattergun approach dependent on an individual's research interests and affinity to a particular locality.

In addition to the recent trend in the UK of moving away from London-centric studies, we are starting to see a corresponding shift towards a more organised mapping of exhibition practices at a regional level in order to better comprehend what was actually happening on a national level. The AHRC-funded project 'Moving and Projected Images in the South West, 1840–1914', led by John Plunkett, Joe Kember and Jill Sullivan, has recently been at the forefront of this approach by surveying exhibition cultures in the south west of Britain ranging from urban centres to smaller seaside resorts. In conjunction with this, Rosalind Leveridge has researched popular and visual culture in the south west from 1880 to 1914.³¹ There has also been a specially curated edition of *Early Popular Visual Culture* concerning exhibition cultures in the period 1880-1914.³² Jon Burrows has refocussed attention away from London to look at exhibitor T. J. West and his semi-permanent film show in Bournemouth.³³ Burrows also acknowledges the growing call for the role of Edwardian public hall showmen to be re-evaluated and to consider how their legacy impacted the evolution of permanent picture theatres. And in the first major study of early Scottish film, Trevor Griffiths looks at cinema-going and its social and cultural impact from 1896-1950.³⁴

²⁶ Damer Waddington, *Panoramas, Magic Lanterns, Cinemas: A Century of "Light" Entertainment in Jersey 1814-1914* (Jersey: Tocan Books, 2003).

²⁷ Charles Musser and Carol Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures, Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Travelling Exhibition, 1880-1920* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

²⁸ Gregory Waller, *Main Street Amusements: Movies and Commercial Entertainment in a Southern City, 1896-1930* (Washington & London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995).

²⁹ Robert C Allen, 'Motion Picture Exhibition in Manhattan, 1906-1912: Beyond the Nickelodeon', in John Fell, ed., *Film Before Griffith* (Berkeley: University of California, 1983), pp. 162-175.

³⁰ Ben Singer, 'Manhattan Nickelodeons: New Data on Audiences and Exhibitors', in *Cinema Journal*, 34.3, Spring 1995, pp. 5-35.

³¹ Rosalind Leveridge, '“Limelights and Shadows”: Popular and Visual Culture in South West England, 1880-1914' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Exeter, 2011).

³² *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 8.4, 2010.

³³ Jon Burrows, 'West is best!; or, what we can learn from Bournemouth'. *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 8.4 (2010), pp. 351-362.

³⁴ Trevor Griffiths, *The Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland, 1896-1950* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

The scope and methodology of the thesis

National surveys have tended to give the impression that exhibition practices around the country mirrored the patterns found in London and other metropolitan centres.³⁵ But how can this be reconciled with the picture that is found at the suburban level where films may have been shown on only a handful of occasions each year? This is why my detailed local studies of Croydon, Ealing and Woolwich, with their inherent focus on the suburban model, are important as they challenge and redress some of the assumptions that have shaped our understanding of the development of early film exhibition. In what follows, I seek to ascertain the type of venues that were exhibiting films in the suburbs in this period and how frequently they were shown. What types of films were being shown in the suburbs and how did the audience respond to them? And what was the role of the travelling showmen and lanternists in this period, and has this role been underestimated?

In order to answer these questions I employ an empirical and systematic methodological framework by conducting four detailed case studies covering the years 1896 and 1897. It is a two-pronged approach in which I have carefully researched different locations as well as considering the work of a specific lanternist, thereby enabling me to look at film exhibition practices from two different, but closely intertwined, angles. Grounded in original historical study, I have constructed a comprehensive picture of the emergence and development of film exhibition practices in Croydon, Ealing and Woolwich which enables me to analyse the similarities and differences between these three suburbs. I describe the individuals who introduced the cinematograph to these towns, the types of projectors they used, and the films they showed. I determine the frequency of film exhibition and how accessible films were in the suburban setting. I consider the audience response to the cinematograph and investigate who was watching films and whether their response changed over the course of this period. Although my approach is primarily empirical there are also fascinating themes and motifs which relate to the subject matter and manner in which films were promoted, shown, received and reviewed, and these themes are explored in depth under the banner of a concept I label the 'Cinema of Sensation'.

My research is grounded in endless hours working through local newspaper archives and there is no denying that it is a difficult and sometimes thankless task. It involves the systematic and painstaking examination of weekly, sometimes bi-weekly, newspapers which were invariably broadsheets with exceedingly small typeface. I have consulted an extensive range of local and national newspapers which are housed in the

³⁵ Rachael Low, *The History of British Film vol. 1, 1896-1906* (London: Routledge, reprint 1997), p. 37.

British Library Newspaper Collections and local archives. Many have been available by means of microfilm, and increasingly over the course of my research I have witnessed a greater drive towards digitisation and greater online accessibility. But the digitisation process takes time, and so there have been occasions when I have carefully handled bound volumes of newspapers, giving me a tangible sense of touching the past, an experience made all the more palpable by the unique, fragile and delicate nature of this printed material. Newspapers have been my entrée into the late nineteenth century and have given me opportunities to not only uncover salient information relating to venues, exhibitors and films, but also engage and connect with the social context in which films were shown. The discovery of the *Croydon Society Gossip* housed in the library of the Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society has been a revelation. It was published weekly from November 1896 until January 1898, and it set out its stall in the first edition:

Croydon Society Gossip will be what its name implies – a journal devoted to gossip of every description. Taking the word ‘Society’ in its broadest sense, Croydon Society Gossip will welcome to its columns items of interest to Croydonians of every class and station. It will have no politics, no fads, no prejudices, and no personal antipathies; no object except to interest and amuse; no axes to grind, and no grievances to make itself a nuisance about.³⁶

Like many newspapers in this time, this publication came and went probably due to economic difficulties. I am fortunate, however, that it covers the latter part of 1896, and all of 1897, frequently reviewing local entertainments and camera club meetings which provide a wealth of rich detail concerning the cinematograph in Croydon. More generally, advertisements in the local newspapers can tell us much about the venues that were showing films, the exhibitors, apparatus and films that were shown, while admission prices indicate the types of people a venue was catering for and aiming to attract. Entertainments were frequently previewed in the press a week or so in advance and often enlighten us about the expectations surrounding a forthcoming cinematograph exhibition. Reviews following cinematograph events could range from a brief one-sentence comment to lengthy and detailed commentary. Even if a review does not comment extensively on the cinematograph, that in itself can tell us much about how it was received. Information concerning the cinematograph at a local level is also found in entertainment and trade reviews in publications such as *The Era*, *The Optical Magic Lantern Journal* and *The*

³⁶ *Croydon Society Gossip*, 18 November 1896, p. 8.

British Journal of Photography. Other archival sources are used wherever possible, including programmes housed in the British Film Institute Special Collections and the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum in Exeter. Memoirs and reminiscences have also been a useful way of sourcing information, particularly concerning people who recorded their involvement in the cinematograph business. Biographical and company information concerning Horace Banks can be found in records housed at the National Archives and Metropolitan Archives. Birth, marriage and death records have been obtained from the General Register Office. The local archives in Ealing, Croydon and Woolwich have been an extensive resource for archival newspapers, street directories, photographs and other ephemera.

Of course the films themselves are a vital resource and must not be neglected. When focussing on film exhibition and reception, there is a risk of stepping so far back from the films to consider the bigger picture that they become of almost secondary importance. This should not be the case. Some of the films that Horace Banks showed, or that were exhibited in Croydon, Ealing and Woolwich, are still extant. Viewing them today and attempting to place them within the context of the late nineteenth-century audience helps inform our understanding of the subject of the films, and also the possible reasons for their inclusion in film programmes and how they might have been received at the time. As well as prints held in the BFI National Archive and regional film archives, silent films have become increasingly accessible to academics and the general public through the work of the British Film Institute, for example, who have produced DVDs showcasing the films of Robert Paul as well as selections of films from the pre-1910 period.³⁷ Kino Video have produced DVD collections of silent Lumière and Edison films, and a treasury of early cinema from America and Europe, which help inform our understanding of films in this period.³⁸ There is also a vibrant archival exhibition culture offering the opportunity to see silent films as part of touring archive programmes and (silent) film festivals. Footage from the early silent period is also increasingly becoming available to view by means of a variety of online sources, such as the ubiquitous YouTube, where many early shorts have been loaded by individuals, and where the BFI and British Pathé offer official channels

³⁷ *RW Paul The Collected Films 1895-1908* (UK: BFI, 2006); *Early Cinema - Primitives and Pioneers* (UK: BFI, 2005).

³⁸ *The Lumière Brothers' First Films* (USA: Kino International, 1999); *The Movies Begin: A Treasury of Early Cinema, 1894-1914* (USA: Kino International, 2002); *Edison: The Invention of the Movies* (USA: Kino International, 2005).

featuring silent film footage.³⁹ The BFI Screenonline website also offers pertinent multimedia from the early period.⁴⁰

Surveying suburbia

We will see that Horace Banks specialised in taking audiences on an imaginative journey by means of his lantern slide entertainment. Like Banks, in this thesis I am taking you on a journey to the suburbs and the seaside, and navigating the first two years of film exhibition in these areas before surveying more broadly the theme of Sensation. Our journey starts with micro-studies of three London suburbs where the cinematograph arrived at around a similar time in 1896.

Croydon, Ealing and Woolwich were located a similar geographical distance from central London but despite their proximity to the metropolis, a sense of political detachment was apparent, with overt aspirations for greater autonomy and independence at a local government level. Developments in transport and railways links were crucial to the urban expansion and rapid population growth of such suburbs. This expansion attracted the middle-classes to Croydon and Ealing, who were looking to settle in residential suburbs, whilst having the ability to commute up to London for work. At the time of Queen Victoria's Coronation in 1837, the market town of Croydon in Surrey had a population of approximately 15,000, yet by the time of Victoria's death in 1901, the population had increased to around 130,000. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Middlesex town of Ealing was being referred to as the 'Queen of the Suburbs' and in many ways the expansion of Ealing in the nineteenth century mirrors that of Croydon, but on a far smaller scale. In 1897 *The Middlesex County Times* reported that:

the estimated population of Ealing in the middle of last year (1896) is put down at 31,500 – this is the medical officer's reckoning, and is sure to be, if anything, an under-estimate. [...] it means a growth of about 7,500 in the five years since the census. That this growth is mostly in the better class of houses is shown by the wonderful rise in rateable value.⁴¹

³⁹ 'Welcome To The BFI YouTube Channel', *YouTube*, 2015 <<https://youtu.be/VOL6VzO33IM>> [accessed 29 September 2015]; 'British Pathé', *YouTube*, 2015 <<https://www.youtube.com/user/britishpathe>> [accessed 29 September 2015].

⁴⁰ 'BFI Screenonline', *Screenonline.org.uk*, 2015 <<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/>> [accessed 29 September 2015].

⁴¹ *Middlesex County Times*, 3 April 1897, p. 5.

Much of the development in Ealing in the latter half of the nineteenth century can be attributed to Mr Charles Jones, Surveyor to the Middlesex County Council between 1863 and 1913. Jones planned much of suburban Ealing, and as part of a retrospective of 1896, Jones observed that it had ‘not been a specially notable year in the history of Ealing, but we have not been standing still’.⁴² If 1896 was not particularly notable, then to some extent 1897 signalled the culmination of the transition from village to town (comparable to Croydon’s development), in the eyes of the Ordnance Survey at least:

Certainly Ealing ‘has arrived,’ as our French neighbours would put it. We are sorry for the would-be ‘villagers,’ but the authorities of the Ordnance Survey, whose slowness to accept any new place is proverbial, definitely rank it among the large towns of England [...] Ealing has been raised at a bound from the type used for larger villages – or rather, for villages having ancient parishes - to that given to towns such as Croydon or Windsor.⁴³

Despite the persistent push towards respectability, towards the turn of the century these suburbs had assimilated middle-class and working-class populations, with accompanying tensions. In Croydon, as the population of the working classes was rising, the predominantly working-class area of the Old Town increasingly suffered overcrowding and related health issues and epidemics. In 1883 this market town was incorporated as a Municipal Borough of Surrey and by 1889 Croydon had transformed sufficiently to warrant the title of ‘County Borough’, which resulted in greater autonomy and exemption from county administration. With a nod towards middle-class respectability, the new County Borough Council implemented the Croydon Improvement Scheme in the early 1890s, widening the High Street and clearing much of the ‘Middle Row’ slum area.

A drive towards greater respectability and refinement is evident in Ealing through articles and commentary in the local newspapers, which frequently voiced concerns about the poorer classes, vulgarity and rowdyism, or alternatively celebrated their absence. Indeed, there was a thriving Temperance movement in Ealing in this period. Although somewhat whimsical, this comment from *The Middlesex County Times* also had a serious undertone:

⁴² *MCT*, 2 January 1897, p. 6.

⁴³ *MCT*, 22 May 1897, p. 5.

The Bank Holiday passed off very quietly in Ealing [...] Some thousands of people spent the greater part of the day on Ealing Common, where the usual amusements were provided [...] There was singularly little rowdysim or drunkenness during the day, only two persons requiring the attention of the police. An amusing incident occurred in the Mall in the evening. A large paper balloon representing a crowned bust of her Majesty appeared to be falling directly into the roadway. A crowd of several hundred persons quickly assembled, and hands were outstretched to receive the balloon when a gust of wind carried it northwards, and it gently descended on the far side of the shops. Credible witnesses aver that as her Majesty's face disappeared behind the chimney pots it wrinkled into a provoking, half-malicious smile.⁴⁴

We see a slightly different residential distribution in Woolwich in the late nineteenth century to that found in Ealing or Croydon. Woolwich had been a small Kentish town before experiencing rapid growth in the military and industrial areas and becoming part of London in 1889 with the formation of the London County Council. The development of the town and the population composition was consequently influenced by institutions like the Dockyard, the Arsenal and the Royal Artillery. In 1896 *The Kentish Independent and County Advertiser* reported the population for Woolwich and it is interesting that it is apportioned by a figure for the Arsenal (21,959) and a figure for the Dockyard (19,355).⁴⁵ A photograph (undated) of workers leaving the Royal Arsenal at dinner time (**Fig. 1**) gives a sense of the large number of people who were employed by the Arsenal, and the image also has a nice resonance with the iconic Lumière film *La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière à Lyon* (1895), which showed workers leaving the Lumière factory.

⁴⁴ *MCT*, 12 June 1897, p. 6.

⁴⁵ *Kentish Independent and County Advertiser*, 14 November 1896, p. 4.



Fig. 1. Woolwich Arsenal, dinner time.

‘Royal Arsenal & Military’, *Chrismansfieldphotos.com*, 2015

<<http://www.chrismansfieldphotos.com/RECORDS-of-WOOLWICH/Royal-Arsenal-/>> [accessed 24 September 2015]

Croydon, Ealing and Woolwich were situated within relatively easy travelling distance of the entertainments on offer in central London, whilst also having a plethora of their own localised social and leisure activities. Since the early 1890s music hall proprietors had been attempting to attract the patronage of the middles classes, hence suburban music halls became ‘variety theatres,’ ‘palaces’ or ‘empires’ to present an air of respectability and refinement. Generally the cost of an evening’s entertainment at such a venue ranged from sixpence to two shillings, and sometimes even as high as three shillings, depending on the quality of the entertainment. These sorts of costs were generally comparable in Croydon and Ealing and are an indication that they were catering predominantly for middle and lower-middle class tastes and pockets. There was a lower price band for entertainments in Woolwich, with prices as low as threepence, which reflected the greater industrial and working-class culture. The growth of these towns as suburban residential areas also resulted in the establishment of numerous clubs and societies providing religious, musical, literary and dramatic entertainments which were particularly aimed at the middle-classes. Public halls also offered a variety of entertainments and lectures, often with an instructive or educational element, depending on the exhibitor or showman utilising the space. In Woolwich we also see some provision for the education and improvement of adult members of the working-classes through access to the local Polytechnic.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Croydonians had several options with regards to choosing how to spend their leisure time. The Grand Theatre had opened in 1896 for the production of plays and melodramas, and by the end of 1897 two variety halls had opened to cater for a growing middle-class populace. There was a strong culture of personal improvement and development which was evident in the range of clubs and societies which were offered at a local level. From the 1870s ‘the Croydon Literary and Scientific Institution [...] was the intellectual centre of Croydon. [...] Its reading-room was frequented by the leading citizens; its soirees and other gatherings were famous in the eighties; and there were developed here the Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society and various other social clubs’.⁴⁶ There was also a vibrant camera club and frequent lectures held at the Public Hall, often illustrated by lantern slides. By 1897 Ealing still lacked a legitimate theatre, although it produced good quality variety entertainment and theatrical productions at the Lyric Hall and Victoria Hall. There were also a number of clubs and societies, many of which held their meetings in the Victoria Hall. Increasingly the Victoria Hall was used for concerts, entertainments and balls. Indeed, throughout 1896 and 1897 there are a growing number of announcements in the local press for a diverse range of entertainments taking place there, putting it in direct competition with the Lyric. In Woolwich, despite its grand-sounding name, Barnard’s Theatre Royal was more aligned with a typical music hall in terms of the entertainments it offered. As Woolwich was a garrison town, the types of entertainments on offer tended to reflect that, and catered for workers of the arsenal. The Royal Artillery Theatre, for example, started off life as a multi-purpose hall in the Barracks before being converted for theatrical use.

How the thesis is organised

In Chapter One we commence our journey in Croydon where I examine each occurrence of film exhibition chronologically in the period 1896-1897, in order to construct a picture of the different venues showing films and the individuals who brought the cinematograph to the town. I also consider which films were shown and how they were received by audiences. I reflect on how a local filmmaking culture impacted the frequency of film exhibition in Croydon, as well as considering the role of the Camera Club in bringing the cinematograph to the attention of its members and wider community. The impact of seasonal and special events will also be discussed as will the associated opportunities for venues to use film the cinematograph strategically. It is also here that we first make the acquaintance of the lanternist Horace Banks, who will be the focus of Chapter Six.

⁴⁶ Town Hall Croydon, *Our Croydon* (Croydon: The Galleon Press, 1947), p. 107.

In Chapter Two we travel to Ealing, where I apply the same model to trace film exhibition during this period. Although we find more limited opportunities for film shows here, there are still many insights that can be gleaned in relation to venues, exhibitors, films and reception, which will provide an important comparison to exhibition practices in Croydon and Woolwich. Once again we meet Horace Banks here on our travels.

In Chapter Three we make our way to Woolwich and I examine how exhibition practices and reception changed over the course of 1896 and 1897, and consider the impact of external noteworthy and sensational events on the frequency of film exhibition. I also look at whether the film selection in Woolwich differed to that in Croydon and Ealing given the influence of its working-class and industrial background.

In Chapter Four I examine the trajectory of the so-called 'X-ray craze' and how the excitement of this 'new photography' impacted the cinematograph in this period, particularly during 1896 when demonstrations of X-Rays and the cinematograph were both beginning to occur in suburban areas. I look at a number of X-ray demonstrations in Croydon, Ealing and Woolwich, and also consider more broadly the fascination and horror that X-rays generated.

In Chapter Five I compare and contrast my findings in all three suburban towns and draw some conclusions about the suburban film-going experiences in this period. I consider parallels and differences between the towns in terms of the venues, exhibitors, and frequency of film exhibition. I also consider the impact of the X-Ray craze and Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.

In Chapter Six we accompany Horace Banks on his tour of Britain in 1896 and 1897, where he takes us to the south-east coast, the Isle of Wight, the Channel Isles and other provincial towns on the mainland. I examine the different types of venues in which Banks was exhibiting, and I look closely at the films he was showing in this period and what the audience response was. I also consider how successfully the medium of the cinematograph and the subject of the films worked alongside his existing format of dioramic tours and concert party. This detailed study also enables me to contextualise his Ealing and Croydon exhibitions and provide a sense of continuity to his exhibition practices, by examining how they changed over time and their impact more broadly on film exhibition in this period. We begin to see the germination of themes arising out of his film programme and his manner of exhibition which will be discussed in depth in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Seven is our final port of call. By adopting a detail-focussed and empirical approach, without attempting to draw conclusions or make connections, the local case

study runs the risk of remaining a standalone, detached and limited piece of research. Wary of such an approach, here I stand back from the empirical detail to consider it from a wider perspective, drawing new research conclusions by bringing together the common themes and motifs that I have uncovered and which I describe under the overarching theme of 'Sensation'. I discuss how the Cinema of Sensation relates to the film subjects, the stimulation of the senses engendered by the films, a curiosity with objects being given life, and the physical sensation of viewing. I look at the themes of travel and ethnography, as well as considering how the ideas of movement, speed and life-like motions were prevalent in films and in advertisements and reviews.

Collectively these case studies, in combination with the discourse surrounding the Cinema of Sensation, provide new insights into film exhibition practices in suburban and seaside areas during 1896 and 1897, and help to better shape our understanding of the initial impact of the cinematograph in these areas. This contributes to a growing body of work and presents a deeper understanding of how the British film-going experience emerged and developed in the late-Victorian era, laying the foundations for one of the key leisure pursuits of the twentieth century and beyond.

CHAPTER ONE

REACHING THE SUBURBS: THE CINEMATOGRAPH IN CROYDON

The Rage of London

In August 1896 *The Croydon Advertiser and Surrey County Reporter* informed its readers of the popularity of the Cinématographe-Lumière exhibition at the Empire in London.¹ Indeed, this particular newspaper reported quite frequently on plays or entertainments occurring at the more prestigious London venues, which suggests that some Croydonians were travelling up to London for an evening's entertainment. An advertisement in the *Croydon Society Gossip* also directed readers to a local agency where they could purchase tickets for central London entertainments: 'Box-office for all London theatres, Crystal Palace, Empire, Alhambra, &c., 106, George-Street, Croydon'.² In the autumn of 1896, Croydon audiences finally had the opportunity to witness animated photographs locally. The arrival of Robert Paul's celebrated Theatrograph in Croydon in October garnered much local attention and public interest, but this was not the first display of animated pictures in the town as a mysterious projector was displayed by an unknown exhibitor the previous month. Croydonians would have a number of opportunities to witness the new technological marvel of animated photography during the remainder of 1896 and 1897. In this chapter I examine chronologically each occurrence of film exhibition in Croydon in this period, and consider the venues, exhibitors, films and audience reaction. The role of the local Camera Club in showcasing the cinematograph which also be explored, as will the cinematographic achievements of several of its members.

Living Photographs were advertised in the Croydon press (**Fig. 1.1**) to be shown four-times nightly at the Horniman Hall from Wednesday 30 September to Saturday 3 October 1896.³ For the price of sixpence the public had the opportunity to witness animated pictures in suburban Croydon for the first time. It is possible that the description 'Living Photographs' could refer to *tableaux vivants* rather than animated pictures, but in this instance I am confident that these were actually animated pictures, as the taglines 'THE RAGE OF LONDON!' and 'THE WONDER OF THE AGE!' are more in keeping with publicity for the latest photographic marvel than the more established *tableaux*

¹ *Croydon Advertiser and Surrey County Reporter*, 22 August 1896, p. 2.

² *CSG*, 16 December 1896, p. 2.

³ *CT*, 26 September 1896, p. 5.

vivants.⁴ The short, hourly format of the displays also suggests a series of film demonstrations. This advertisement emphasises the photographs rather than the exhibitor or apparatus, which suggests that it was not the more well-known Cinématographe, Theatrograph or a showman incorporating films into an existing lantern or musical entertainment, but rather an exhibitor who had grasped an opportunity to potentially make some money using simply a projector.

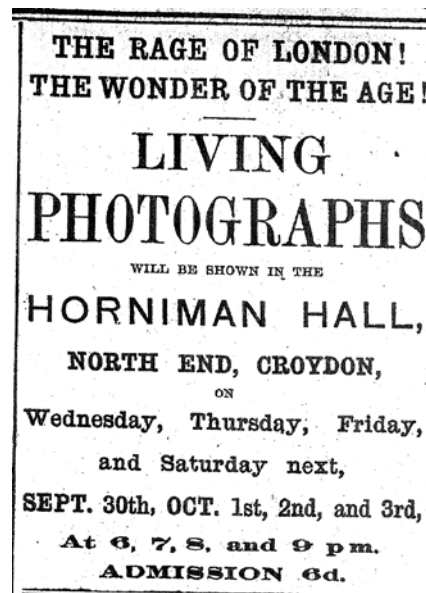


Fig. 1.1 Advertisement, Horniman Hall, *The Croydon Times*, 26 September 1896, p. 5.

The Horniman Hall was home to the Croydon Young Men's Christian Association (Y.M.C.A.), situated at 137, North End. This exhibition of living photographs appears to be unconnected to the Y.M.C.A. however, as their listings for the week of 26 September made no reference to it.⁵ According to an advertisement the hall could seat up to five hundred people, and could be hired for public meetings⁶ so it seems that the hall was hired independently on this occasion. Unfortunately, it appears that the local press did not review this exhibition, so it remains a mystery as to who was exhibiting these living photographs, which films were shown, how many people attended, and what the public reaction was. What we can surmise, given that the press advertisement does not refer to any other variety elements, is that this was a standalone programme of animated pictures shown at hourly intervals which was an innovative, although not unheard of, method of exhibition at this time. This format could prove lucrative if the exhibitor succeeded in filling the hall for

⁴ *Tableaux vivants*, or 'living pictures', were re-enactments of paintings or historical events staged by a group of models, without the elements of physical movement and speech.

⁵ CA, 26 September 1896, p. 4.

⁶ CA, 28 March 1896, p. 5.

each sitting, enabling him to make as much as two hundred pounds (less venue hire costs) over the course of four days.

The National Palace of Varieties

Although Croydonians were fortunate to have the opportunity to witness the Theatrograph in 1896, this opportunity came almost eight months after the first London exhibitions of the apparatus and by this time some locals may already have experienced animated photography locally or in London. The Theatrograph may not have provided the first film exhibition in Croydon, but its arrival did overshadow the apparatus that made claim to that title. Indeed, the interest surrounding the first two film exhibitions in Croydon could hardly have been more contrasting. The Theatrograph arrived in Croydon a few days later under a blaze of positive publicity in the wake of its spell at the Alhambra in Central London. It stole the limelight and headlined the inaugural programme of the newly opened National Palace of Varieties. Due to plentiful press reviews we can identify many of the films that were shown and appreciate how the audience reacted to them.

The Theatrograph was exhibited at the Palace of Varieties from Monday 5 October⁷ for two weeks.⁸ This new venue was clearly aiming to cater to a wide class of audience as admission prices ranged from sixpence to three shillings, depending on the seating. If the former Croydon North End Circus had not been remodelled into the Palace of Varieties, there would have been few alternative venues available for Paul in which to exhibit the Theatrograph in Croydon, other than smaller public halls for hire. The new variety hall must then have been an attractive choice for Paul, especially as his exhibition coincided with the greatly anticipated grand re-opening of the hall in its new guise. Newspaper advertisements for the venue illustrate the importance of the apparatus itself to draw in the crowds (**Fig. 1.2**). Here, 'THEATROGRAPH' headlines the bill in large, uppercase letters, showing how the name of a projector could be synonymous with the concept of animated photography. This is in contrast to the advertisement for the Horniman Hall, which emphasised the concept of animated photography but did not name the apparatus. The proclamation 'The Biggest Sensation of the Century!' in the advertisement below functions on two levels. Whilst it implants the idea that the Theatrograph is a sensational spectacle and essential viewing, it also stresses the physical sensation of viewing films. There is also the declaration that the Theatrograph has come 'Direct from the Alhambra', emphasising how privileged Croydonians were to have an entertainment which had recently been

⁷ *CT*, 3 October 1896, p. 5.

⁸ A poster for the National Palace Theatre of Varieties (Monday 12 October 1896) states that it is the last week of the Theatrograph. The poster is housed in the National Media Museum, Bradford.

available at a prestigious hall in central London. A preview in *The Croydon Times* similarly asserts that the Theatrograph had been ‘imported from the Alhambra’.⁹ These claims were a little disingenuous, however, as the Theatrograph was exhibited continuously at the Alhambra until June 1897 under the name ‘Animatographe’, so the Theatrograph apparatus demonstrated in Croydon was simply one of the several models that Paul had manufactured by that time.

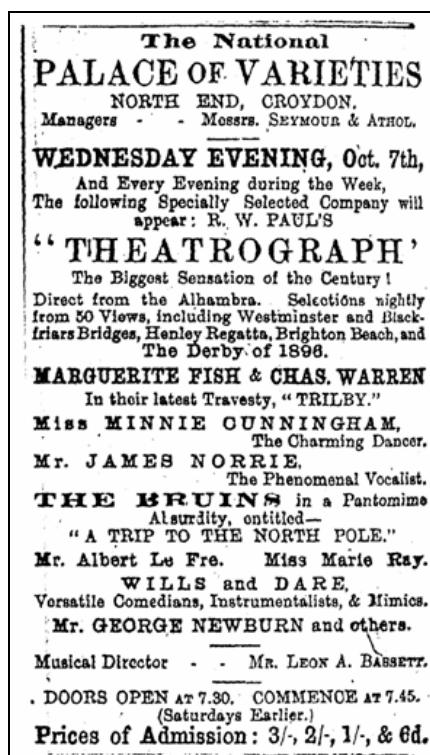


Fig. 1.2 Advertisement, National Palace of Varieties, *The Croydon Times*, 7 October 1896, p. 4.

Unlike the exhibition at the Horniman Hall, the local press commented on the Theatrograph programme extensively, no doubt as it coincided with the grand opening of the variety hall. It was certainly a great success as a report published soon after the first performance shows:

Much conjecture had been aroused by the announcement that Mr. R. W. Paul would give a display of his “Theatrograph,” and indeed the pictures projected on to the screen caused a perfect sensation. Especially good were those representing Blackfriar’s Bridge, Henley Regatta, Brighton Beach, Queen’s Park and the Derby of 1896, which latter provoked round upon round of

⁹ *CT*, 3 October 1896, p. 5.

applause, Mr Paul eventually appearing in answer to the plaudits of the audience.¹⁰

This establishes that Paul himself was exhibiting the Theatrograph in Croydon, which was not unusual as the commercially-minded Paul supervised a number of Theatrograph performances in London at this time, as he explained:

At this period the purchasers of many of my projectors worked them personally. Though we did our best to train lanternists and limelight operators to use the machine properly, their results were sometimes indifferent. Therefore, I attended in the evenings at many of the London music halls, the times of showing being carefully arranged in advance. This helped to maintain the reputation of the projector. I drove, with an assistant, from one hall to another in a one-horse brougham, rewinding the films during the drive.¹¹

The Croydon Times advertisement asserts there were fifty films available from which a selection would be shown nightly. The following review from *The Croydon Chronicle* is worth reproducing in detail as it lists the full array of films exhibited during the first night in Croydon and shows how important the impression of movement and life-like images were to the audience:

But what shall be said of R. W. Paul's theatrograph, with its wonderful realistic pictures of every-day life, including "Professor Maskelyne," "Plate Spinney," "Paris Express," "Up the River," "Blackfriars Bridge," "Engineer's Shop," "Levant Conjuror," "Brighton," "Ramsgate," "A Comic Race," "The Derby," "Trinity Hall Crew," "Queen's Park on Sunday," "Twin's Tea Party," &c., which fairly aroused the house. Nothing has been seen like it in Croydon, and it is worth a journey to the Hall to see. "The Derby, 1896," was applauded to the echo, and "Victoria Park," with its humorous moving situations, was as good as any pantomime. The house was very demonstrative indeed in their places. The many interesting phases of life, waves moving, people running, trains passing, are all portrayed to the life, and the theatrograph is a wonderful and amusing production. Its first picture was "Visitors are respectfully requested

¹⁰ *CT*, 7 October 1896, p. 5.

¹¹ *Proceedings of the British Kinematograph Society* no. 38 (3 February 1936), p. 4. Quoted in Barnes, *vol. 1*, p. 121.

not to strike matches during the performance.” This ought to be recorded, seeing that it is the first time that such a notice could be placed in any entertaining hall in Croydon.¹²

Paul was evidently exhibiting a mixed selection of films, featuring non-fiction and actuality, news events and fictional scenes.¹³ Paul is not known to have produced a film called *Levant Conjurer*, so it is most likely to be Paul’s film of the magician David Devant, and the reviewer was mistaken by the similar sounding words. *Plate Spinney* should probably read *Plate Spinning*, which featured John Nevil Maskelyne from the Egyptian Hall. We can also glean from an advertisement in *The Croydon Times* that the available films included views of Westminster and Blackfriars Bridges, Henley Regatta, Brighton Beach, and the Derby of 1896,¹⁴ which evoke iconic images of London, or relate to prominent Victorian social and sporting experiences. As the Derby was held in early June and Henley Regatta took place in early July, the programme included relatively recent and newsworthy events.

Many of these films are either included in Paul’s first catalogue¹⁵ or frequently mentioned in other press reports in this period. Two of these film titles are, however, a new discovery so far as I am aware. *Queen’s Park on Sunday* and *Victoria Park* are not recorded in Paul’s catalogues and I have not seen references to them elsewhere. The location of Queen’s Park is ambiguous as it could have been set in a number of so-named parks in Britain, a small example being London, Brighton, Glasgow and Edinburgh. Certainly Paul is known to have filmed in each of these places in this period. Similarly, Victoria Park was understandably a popular name for park spaces in this period.

As for the 1896 Derby film, which was ‘applauded to the echo’,¹⁶ when viewing the film today it is hard to imagine such a short and objectively unexciting recording of the finish of a horse race producing such a reaction.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the Derby was a significant annual sporting event which generated a huge amount of national public interest, rather like the Grand National does today. This anecdote from *The Era* highlights the impact of this annual spectacle in the entertainment business:

¹² *Croydon Chronicle and East Surrey Advertiser*, 10 October 1896, p. 5.

¹³ See Appendix 2 (i) for a list of films shown by Robert Paul in Croydon in October 1896.

¹⁴ *CT*, 26 September 1896, p. 5.

¹⁵ *List of Films or Subjects for the “Theatrograph”*, issued by R. W. Paul in November 1896 and reproduced in Barnes, vol. 1, p. 231.

¹⁶ *CC*, 10 October 1896, p. 5.

¹⁷ *RW Paul The Collected Films 1895-1908* (UK: BFI, 2006); *Early Cinema - Primitives and Pioneers* (UK: BFI, 2005).

There is always a severe outbreak of indisposition on Derby night; and on Wednesday many were the growls heard as telegrams were handed in to proprietors and managers announcing on the part of star turns their inability to appear. Said one managing director: "If they want to go to the Derby why don't they just say so – not play the medical certificate 'fake;' it's so worn out."¹⁸

Whilst the Derby may have created problems for some entertainment venues with disappearing acts, Paul's short film of the race was a great success and was sure to entice an intrigued audience. The overwhelming response to the film was partly a by-product of the general enthusiasm regarding the result of the race which was won by Persimmon, a well-known racehorse owned by the Prince of Wales (the future King Edward VII). There was a tremendously close finish which prompted spectators to overrun the course. Paul had also worked rapidly to ensure that the film was ready to be exhibited at the Alhambra in London the day following the race.¹⁹ This quick turnaround meant that Paul's film of the Derby was effectively shown as a news item in London. Four months later Croydon audiences also had the opportunity to experience the Derby for themselves. Despite this delay, it is clear from local reviews that the film was still capable of causing a stir, and enabled people to participate in the excitement and witness a spectacle that they would have heard much about during the preceding months.

After almost two weeks of animated picture exhibition, *The Croydon Chronicle* continued to endorse the experience of viewing the Theatrograph, even publishing this review on the final day of the engagement:

R. W. Paul's 'Theatrograph' has caught on, and we counsel all to go and see for themselves its marvels. As last week, Mr. Paul was called before the curtain, and every picture was cheered. 'The Gardener Watering,' 'The Soldier's Courtship,' and 'The Derby of 1896' being prime favourites. A pleasantly lighted hall, a cosy seat, and bright pictures before one, the fragrant delights of the weed, a glass in moderation, or even the cup that cheers, and [*sic*] hour of life's leisure is easily and profitably whiled away within the precincts of our New Palace Theatre.²⁰

¹⁸ *Era*, 6 June 1896, p. 17.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²⁰ *CC*, 17 October 1896, p. 5.

In addition to *The Derby*, here we see that the comic films *The Soldier's Courtship* and *The Gardener Watering* also proved a successful draw for Croydon audiences. *The Soldier's Courtship* was a double-length film, described in Paul's catalogue as a 'very comic scene, meeting of soldier and sweetheart, arrival of third party who attempts to crowd them, but is thrown off the seat by the soldier'.²¹ Little is known of *The Gardener Watering*, but doubtless it employed the comedic plot of Lumière's popular *L'Arroseur Arrosé* in which a gardener is sprayed with water from a hose pipe when a boy plays a trick on him.

Overall the reviews in the Croydon press indicate that the Theatrograph was a success and it seems that the Theatrograph was the highlight of the variety programme as it secured 'the larger amount of appreciation out of the twelve different turns'.²² The success of the Theatrograph boded well for showmen intending to exhibit cinematograph apparatus in Croydon in the future. There would however be only two further commercial cinematograph displays in Croydon in 1896, neither of which would generate the same level of excitement as the Theatrograph. In the meantime, the scientific aspect of the cinematograph was sure to be appreciated by members of the Croydon Camera Club.

William Friese-Greene

Following the invention of photography during the early nineteenth century, there had been a growing appeal in photography as a hobby, aided by the increased accessibility of the materials and technology required for individuals to produce their own photographs and photographic slides. The Edwardian-set Ealing Studios film *Kind Hearts and Coronets* illustrates the popularity of photography as a hobby quite neatly when Louis Mazzini commits murder by exploiting Henry D'Ascoyne's enthusiasm in amateur photography. D'Ascoyne meets his death in an explosion in his customised dark room and Mazzini comes one step closer to avenging the death of his mother and inheriting a dukedom. Mazzini recounts his foray into photography by means of a flashback:

I bought the necessary equipment, second-hand, and bicycled down the following weekend. I had studied a couple of photographic manuals during the week and found that, in practice, the mysteries of the camera demanded little more than ordinary intelligence, plus the ability to judge the subject upside

²¹ *List of Films or Subjects for the "Theatrograph"*, reproduced in Barnes, vol. 1, p. 231.

²² CA, 17 October 1896, p. 8.

down. It was thus, indeed, that I first saw Henry D'Ascoyne. My method of approach proved an instantaneous success.²³

The Croydon Camera Club was founded in 1890 and was initially presided over by Hector Maclean, who was well-known in photographic circles and frequently contributed articles to the photographic press. Similar to many camera clubs around the country, the Croydon Camera Club became a thriving weekly institution where members and invited guests gave lectures, photographic results were displayed and recent technical developments were discussed. The members included local gentlemen who had a keen interest in photography, whether as amateurs or professionals, and who paid a subscription to attend regular meetings. Croydon was a successful photographic centre, best known for the Wratten and Wainwright factory which manufactured photographic plates and supplies. The Camera Club was to occupy a rather niche place in the history of early film exhibition in Croydon due to its unique nature as an amateur-professional society which focussed more on the technological wonder of the cinematograph than on the entertainment value.

On Wednesday 2 December 1896 the photographer and inventor William Friese-Greene gave a lecture and demonstration to the Croydon Camera Club in the Old School of Art Room. Here he would find an appreciative audience of like-minded individuals who shared his passion for photography. The Camera Club members were photographed in 1896 (**Fig. 1.3**) and it is likely that some of these men were present at Friese-Greene's cinematograph demonstration.



Fig. 1.3 Croydon Camera Club members on the Town Hall steps, 1896.

'Croydon Club Archive History: Archived Group Photographs', *croydoncameraclub.org.uk*, 2015
<<http://www.croydoncameraclub.org.uk/ClubArchiveHome/ClubArchiveGroupPhotographs/ClubArchiveGroupPhotographs.htm>> [accessed 24 September 2015]

²³ *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. Dir. Robert Hamer. Ealing Studios. 1949.

Friese-Greene is an interesting character in the history of moving pictures. He moved from the West Country to London in 1885 and opened two shops in partnership with photographer Esmé Collings. By 1891 he was bankrupt, but went on to patent various devices connected with moving pictures throughout the course of the decade, and later worked on colour in motion pictures. Luke McKernan perhaps sums him up best when he describes him as ‘the most maddening figure in early British film history. He was maddening at the time, and he has continued to create confusion and division ever since’. He garners/earns this description as he was prolific at patenting photographic, magic lantern and printing apparatus and devices which never quite lived up to the claims he made for them. John Barnes also gives him short shrift and does not linger long on his contribution to the field of moving pictures, particularly as he does not appear to have actually produced a practical method of cinematography (despite claims to the contrary). Martin Sopocy was a little more benevolent towards Friese-Greene in an article written in 1978, and speculated that despite his questionable claim to have invented the motion picture camera ‘his sheer enthusiasm for the moving photographs – for which, by the way, he never sought a commercial use - may still win him a place in cinema history’.²⁴ Although film historians have not subsequently re-positioned his results at the forefront of the invention of motion photography, his enthusiasm and persistence in this field is unequivocal.

A local newspaper reported that Friese-Greene was introduced at the meeting as ‘the inventor of animated or living photographs’.²⁵ This was a description that had been particularly propagated by the *Optical Magical Lantern Journal* as they often endorsed Friese-Greene as the inventor of cinematography within their pages. The editor of the journal, Mr. J. Hay Taylor, was friends with Friese-Greene and was given the opportunity to be the first to announce Friese-Greene’s moving picture results as early as November 1889 in his journal. From that juncture onwards, Mr. J. Hay Taylor considered that Friese-Greene ‘should have the first credit of making it possible for persons to view pictures of the animated picture type’.²⁶

According to the *Croydon Society Gossip* the demonstration by Friese-Greene was a momentous occasion in the Camera Club calendar:

Mr. Hector Maclean, the President of the club [...] might well exclaim that the audience had spent an evening which would be ever memorable, inasmuch as

²⁴ Martin Sopocy, ‘A Narrated Cinema: The Pioneer Story Films of James A. Williamson’, *Cinema Journal*, 18:1 (1978), p. 2.

²⁵ CC, 5 December 1896, p. 5.

²⁶ *The Kinematograph & Lantern Weekly*, 15 July 1909, p. 473.

they had been privileged to hear the words and watch the demonstrations of one of the most fertile and distinguished inventors and discoverers in the domain of photography.²⁷

According to film historian John Barnes, the films exhibited included the Esmé Collings films *The Broken Melody* and *The Lord Mayor's Show*; an Edison film *Buffalo Bill*; the Paul-Acres film *Rough Sea at Dover*; and *The Tub Race (in the sea)*.²⁸ The original source for this information, however, does not specifically mention Paul-Acres and *Rough Sea at Dover*, but merely describes a view of 'rough waves breaking against a sea wall'.²⁹ It is just as plausible that the rough sea film was Collings' *Hove Sea Wall in a Gale* produced circa October, especially as Friese-Greene was showing at least two other films made by Collings, his former business partner. It is also curious that *The Croydon Chronicle* describes one of the films as 'a rough day at Hastings',³⁰ although a film of this subject is not known to have been made. There are three possible explanations for this: firstly an unknown Hastings film was shown; secondly the location was misreported in the newspaper; or thirdly the film was described incorrectly by Friese-Greene. *The Tub Race (in the sea)* was most probably Edison's *Tub Race* which was produced by mid-September 1896.³¹

The British Journal of Photography included regular reports on camera club meetings and proceedings from around the country. Reports were submitted by members, and we therefore have a useful first-hand account of the films shown in Croydon and the reaction to them by club members. Following *The Lord Mayor's Show* it was reported 'at this point the prolonged applause testified to the audience's deep delight'. *The Broken Melody* was apparently a 'captivating scene' although 'perhaps the finest and most perfect effects were the sea views'. *The Tub Race* was branded 'technically good, and also had the further merit of causing roars of laughter'.³² According to *The Croydon Chronicle*, the mysterious *Rough Day at Hastings* also 'proved very enjoyable, and showed how natural the pictures could be made to appear'.³³ The *Croydon Society Gossip* was also glowing in its praise of the evening:

²⁷ CSG, 9 December 1896, p. 5

²⁸ Barnes, *vol. I*, p. 186.

²⁹ *British Journal of Photography*, 43.1910 (11 December 1896), p. 797.

³⁰ CC, 5 December 1896, p. 5.

³¹ Charles Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures, 1890-1900: An Annotated Filmography* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), p. 242.

³² BJP, 43.1910 (11 December 1896), p. 797.

³³ CC, 5 December 1896, p. 5.

Mr. W. Friese Greene's demonstrations [...] beat the record. No one has hitherto combined so much interest, novelty, and utility as were packed into two hours of brilliant demonstrations and absorbing experiments. [...] The flicker was much less than usual, the pictures brilliantly illuminated, and the objectionable clatter of the machinery unnoticeable.³⁴

It is fortunate we have such comprehensive information from several sources concerning the films that Friese-Greene exhibited in Croydon.³⁵ In spite of this, it is still unclear which projector Friese-Greene was using, although the *Croydon Society Gossip* implied it was his own apparatus: 'Moving Photographs were shown on the screen with a perfection which speaks well for Mr. Friese Green's [*sic*] projection lantern'.³⁶ More explicitly *The British Journal of Photography* reported that he 'described and showed various models of cameras which he had successively invented, and similarly treated of the lantern apparatus used for projecting the moving image upon the screen'.³⁷ Barnes, however, casts doubt on this and argues that Friese-Greene may not have produced a workable camera at this stage as he was showing films made by his contemporaries rather than showcasing his own films. Also, although he patented two projectors in the latter half of the year, we cannot be certain which projector he was using or if it was definitely of his own design.³⁸ Even if Friese-Greene was not utilising his own apparatus, it is clear from the positive reviews that he was certainly proficient at showing films on a good quality projector, and adept at choosing suitable films, for what could be seen as a challenging audience due to their photographic knowledge and expectations. A historical account of the Club proudly asserts that 'to its everlasting credit the Club appreciated both the man and his work that at the next meeting it was proposed by the President that Friese Greene should be made an Honorary life member of the Club [...] and the proposal unanimously adopted'.³⁹

At the end of the meeting on 2 December, the Club President 'drew attention to another exhibition which would take place at the Braithwaite Hall next month, when a series of animated pictures will be shown by means of a machine which is being perfected by Messrs. Bender and Company, photographers, of East Croydon'.⁴⁰ The general public

³⁴ CSG, 9 December 1896, p. 5.

³⁵ See Appendix 2 (ii) for the list of films exhibited by Friese-Greene in Croydon.

³⁶ CSG, 9 December 1896, p. 5.

³⁷ *BJP*, 43.1910 (11 December 1896), p. 797.

³⁸ Barnes, *vol. 1*, pp. 184-186.

³⁹ John Keane, *The Story of The Croydon Camera Club. A short account of its origin and early history* (1950), 'Croydon Club Archive History: 1890-1918', [croydoncameraclub.org.uk](http://www.croydoncameraclub.org.uk), 2015
<http://www.croydoncameraclub.org.uk/ClubArchiveHome/ClubArchiveHistory1950/ClubArchiveHistory1950_01.htm> [accessed 24 September 2015].

⁴⁰ CC, 5 December 1896, p. 5.

would also have the opportunity to see that particular machine in action the following week, and it was to play an important role in Croydon in 1897.

A Grand International Bazaar

The Public Hall next exhibited animated pictures in Croydon on Saturday 12, Monday 14, and Tuesday 15 December 1896, when a Kinematograph was included as part of a grand international bazaar to raise funds for the Croydon Church Institute. This projector did not appear to warrant any special emphasis in an advertisement placed in *The Croydon Chronicle* as it was merely listed amongst a motley collection of entertainments, including historical tableaux, waxworks and hat trimming competitions.⁴¹ The *Croydon Guardian* only mentioned the kinematograph in passing,⁴² and a lengthy review in *The Croydon Chronicle* neglected to mention the animated pictures at all.⁴³ The local *Croydon Society Gossip* publication, on the other hand, described the machine, exhibitors and the films in detail and it transpires that it was, in fact, the Grand Kinematograph of Messrs. Bender & Co, of which we will hear more of in due course.

For the *Croydon Society Gossip* reviewer, the Kinematograph was ‘the most interesting “show” of all’ and ‘the effect of the exhibition is far beyond anything hitherto seen. Not only is the noise much less, but the flicker on the sheet has been greatly reduced, and a much more satisfactory result obtained’.⁴⁴ As well as the emphasis on the technical capabilities, there was also a full description of the films shown:

The Kinematograph was one of the attractions of the bazaar, and each demonstration was crowded, among those present being the Mayor and Mayoress. The pictures shown included a view of the demolition of East Croydon Station, a falling wall, with the dust slowly rising in clouds; children at play in the Park Hill Recreation Ground; Hyde Park Corner (with Horse Guards passing); the old Fish Market at Hastings, in which the effect of a misty morning was excellently shown; several street scenes in Croydon, and a view of a slowly breaking wave at Ilfracombe, which was depicted in a lifelike manner. The demonstrations were an entire success, and credit is due to the operator Mr. F. Judge, for his skilful work. Mr. Adolph Langfier introduced the various subjects, and Miss Ethel Savage was at the piano.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 4.

⁴² *Croydon Guardian and Surrey County Gazette*, 19 December 1896, p. 6.

⁴³ CC, 19 December 1896, p. 3.

⁴⁴ CSG, 16 December 1896, p. 5.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

This appears to be the first record of local films being shown in Croydon to a commercial audience for the purposes of entertainment. The films evidently caused a stir and there was also a sense of pride that a local firm was producing this kind of equipment: 'It is gratifying to note that the entire apparatus – films, photographs, mechanism, and all – has been produced in Croydon, and that orders for supplies are being received from all over the world'.⁴⁶ It certainly makes sense that the Croydon films (*Street Scenes*, *Park Hill* and *Demolition of East Croydon Station*) were produced by the local firm. The other three films are a little more difficult to ascribe to a particular filmmaker, although perhaps this gives credence to the claim that they were made by Bender & Co.

Bell's Realisations

The Public Hall next hosted animated pictures as part of 'Bell's Realisations' which commenced on Boxing Day 1896. The entertainment took place twice daily until 2 January 1897,⁴⁷ with admittance prices ranging from sixpence to two shillings depending on the seat selection.



Fig. 1.4 Advertisement, Public Hall, *The Croydon Times*, 26 December 1896, p. 4.

Despite being advertised as the 'GRANDEST CONCERT COMPANY IN OR OUT OF LONDON' little is known of this outfit other than it was managed by Robert Pearson.⁴⁸ In other advertisements the projector is described as 'Edison's Latest Kinematograph'⁴⁹ and 'Edison's very latest'.⁵⁰ By April 1896, Edison had arranged to license Armat and Jenkins'

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ CA, 26 December 1896, p. 6.

⁴⁸ *Era*, 2 January 1897, p. 32.

⁴⁹ *Era*, 9 January 1897, p. 25.

⁵⁰ *Era*, 2 January 1897, p. 32.

projector, which he renamed the Vitascope, and was credited with its invention.⁵¹ However, Barnes casts doubt over whether the Vitascope was ever taken up in Britain, having not found a single reference to it.⁵² The Projecting Kinetoscope (or Projectoscope) which was actually invented by Edison, appears to have arrived in Britain by late September as an advertisement appeared in *The Era* that month offering Edison's Kinematograph for sale.⁵³ If Bell's Realisations genuinely included a *bone fide* Edison projector, it was most likely the Projecting Kinetoscope. Although Pearson employed the generic term 'Kinematograph', it was not unusual for exhibitors and vendors to use this more simplistic term when advertising the Projecting Kinetoscope.

The Croydon Advertiser reviewer described the kinematograph as 'somewhat disappointing, as, like the majority of these machines it is rather unsteady'.⁵⁴ On the other hand, Edison's graphophone, a device for playing recorded sound, was considered 'a great success' by the same reviewer.⁵⁵ *The Croydon Times*, however, was more positive concerning the festive entertainment at the Public Hall:

There were fairly large audiences at the Public Hall on Boxing Day, when a varied entertainment, under the title of Bell's grand Realizations, was given. The "tit-bit" of the programme was the introduction of Edison's world-famed Kinematographe, which excited great interest and wonder. Some capital *tableaux vivants* were also produced, while a Myrioramic, "Voyage to South Africa," was much enjoyed.⁵⁶

The *Croydon Society Gossip* provided even more detail in its report of the entertainment, providing an insight into the reporter's own personal experience of viewing the kinematograph and a description of one of the films that was shown:

The great attraction of the show is a series of marvellously lifelike living pictures produced by means of Edison's Kinematograph. The pictures are of large size, and are the most successful I have yet seen. As a specimen, there is a sea-shore scene, with bare-legged fisher folk walking along the sands and

⁵¹ Stephen Herbert and Luke McKernan, eds, *Who's Who of Victorian Cinema* (London: BFI Publishing, 1996), p. 48.

⁵² Barnes, *vol. 1*, p. 200.

⁵³ *Era*, 26 September 1896, p. 28.

⁵⁴ *CA*, 2 January 1897, p. 8.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *CT*, 30 December 1896, p. 8. A myriorama was a combination of a panorama or diorama, illuminations, music and other variety acts.

breaking waves at intervals. Every picture is instinct with life, and one has to rub one's eyes to ascertain if the picture is an illusion or the thing itself.⁵⁷

The Grand Kinematograph

The beginning of the New Year in Croydon was marked by two cinematograph exhibitions but this was not necessarily a sign of things to come. It will be seen that the frequency of film exhibition in Croydon in commercial venues remained quite static between 1896 and 1897.⁵⁸ It would, however, be the year of the Velograph – an apparatus managed by Bender & Co. which was a local Croydon company. The apparatus began life as the Grand Kinematograph and was renamed the Velograph in June 1897.⁵⁹ There has been confusion regarding the origins of the Grand Kinematograph, and it seems that Messrs Bender and Langfier may have purported that the machine was of their own design. The President of the Croydon Camera Club, for example, felt obliged to clarify his understanding of its origins in a letter to the *British Journal of Photography* in December 1896:

In reply to the letter in your last, from Messrs. T. J. & G. H. Harrison, calling in question an announcement made by me at the Croydon Camera Club, on October 28, I can only say our members, Messrs. Victor Bender and Adolphe Langfier, have always referred to the grand kinematograph as an instrument originally conceived by them at the beginning of March, and since completed under their directions and at their costs.⁶⁰

This was in response to a letter published in the journal from Messrs Harrison who stated that they had invented the Grand Kinematograph, and the right to use and sell it had been acquired by Bender & Co.⁶¹ John Barnes has ascertained that it was invented by the father and son duo Gilbert and Thomas Harrison and patented on 1 August 1896; Bender & Co acquired the sole rights to it in the autumn of 1896.⁶² It was also reported in *Croydon Society Gossip* that Mr T. Harrison, the inventor, was an employee of Bender & Co.⁶³ This

⁵⁷ CSG, 30 December 1896, p. 13.

⁵⁸ The data in Appendix 1 sets out the venues and frequency of film exhibition in Croydon in 1896 and 1897. It is clear that the frequency of exhibition tripled in 1897 but that this was largely due to the endeavours of the non-commercial Camera Club.

⁵⁹ See Barnes, *vol. 1*, pp. 172-175 and Barnes, *The Beginnings of the Cinema in England 1894-1901: vol. 2, 1897* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001), pp. 45-46.

⁶⁰ *BJP*, 43.1910 (11 December 1896), pp. 799-800.

⁶¹ Barnes, *vol. 1*, p. 173.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ CSG, 16 December 1896, p. 5.

may have been an erroneous piece of information as Barnes puts forward a strong case that that Harrison was in fact employed by Messrs. W. & D. Downey.⁶⁴

After being exhibited at the Bazaar in December 1896, the apparatus formed part of the Camera Club's twenty-ninth public lantern show, which took place on Wednesday 13 January 1897 in the Braithwaite Hall on Wellesley Road.⁶⁵ This was the exhibition that the Club President had referred to at the close of Friese-Greene's lecture the previous month.⁶⁶ Members of the Camera Club and well-known lecturers and slide makers attended these types of displays where there would be an admission charge on behalf of the Club funds.⁶⁷ Victor Bender and Adolph(e) Langfier⁶⁸ were responsible for the exhibition and were both members of the Croydon Camera Club, with Langfier elected a member as recently as 18 November 1896.⁶⁹ It was reported that the show 'drew a large audience, numbers being unable to obtain admission'.⁷⁰

Langfier had been due to show an improved version of the Grand Kinematograph, but illness prevented him attending and due to a technical glitch the improved apparatus was not available either.⁷¹ In spite of these setbacks, the exhibition went well, with an older model of the apparatus being exhibited and the Club President lecturing on Langfier's behalf. According to the *Croydon Society Gossip* 'the grand Kinematograph evoked the greatest interest of all [...] the clever reproduction of moving life drew repeated storms of applause'.⁷² Ten films were shown and two in particular caused a stir and were specifically mentioned in *The British Journal of Photography*:

The mimicking of motion exhibited on a twenty-foot screen seemed to be most heartily enjoyed by the assemblage, which on several occasions expressed their feelings by a perfect storm of applause, particularly acceptable being *Demolition of Old Railway Station, Croydon* and *Yacht Landing Pleasure Party, Hastings*.⁷³

⁶⁴ Barnes, *vol. 1*, p. 173.

⁶⁵ *CA*, 9 January 1897, p. 5.

⁶⁶ *CC*, 5 December 1896, p. 5.

⁶⁷ Keane, *The Story of The Croydon Camera Club*.

⁶⁸ Contemporary sources used the spelling 'Adolph' and 'Adolphe' interchangeably.

⁶⁹ *BJP*, 43.1908 (27 November 1896), p. 764.

⁷⁰ *BJP*, 44.1916 (22 January 1897), p. 61.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *CSG*, 20 January 1897, p. 15.

⁷³ *BJP*, 44.1916 (22 January 1897), p. 61.

All the films were reputed to have been filmed personally by Langfrier,⁷⁴ and so it follows that they date from the last quarter of 1896, if that is indeed when Bender & Company acquired the apparatus. Regarding the Hastings film, although pleasure yachts operated for holidaymakers in the summer months (weather permitting), yachts sometimes made pleasure trips into the autumn months. Consequently, Langfrier must have produced (or obtained) this film exceptionally quickly after acquiring the apparatus and it is likely to be one of his earliest films if it was indeed made by him. The image below (**Fig. 1.5**) shows large pleasure yachts landing on Hastings beach in the 1890s. The elements of movement, animation and activity in the composition are strong despite being a still photograph and it provides an impression of what the audience experienced through the medium of Langfrier's film.



Fig. 1.5 The *New Albertine* yacht, Hastings, c. 1890s
'Hastings – Pearson', *Photohistory-sussex.co.uk*, 2015 <<http://photohistory-sussex.co.uk/HastingsPhotgrsPE.htm>> [accessed 24 September 2015]

The Theatre Royal

In January 1897 *The Era* reported an exhibition of Langfrier's Kinematograph at the Theatre Royal in Croydon which had taken place on Friday 15 January. It was somewhat unusual for animated photographs to be shown in this venue as it was a theatrical rather than variety establishment, but on this occasion the Kinematograph was included as part as a special programme or 'Benefit' in honour of the theatre manager:

⁷⁴ Ibid.

On the Friday the acting-manager, Mr Willie Cousins, took his benefit, and had a crowded house, the additional attractions being Mr Adolph Langfier's Kinematograph with local pictures.⁷⁵

Langfier was in good enough health to operate the Kinematograph at the Benefit, although it is not clear whether the improved or original apparatus was used on this occasion. The *Croydon Society Gossip* declared the Kinematograph 'the star turn' and 'the largest animated photographs ever shewn'.⁷⁶ The animated pictures were described in *The Croydon Advertiser* as 'chiefly local [...] very admirably worked, and were some of the steadiest we have seen'.⁷⁷ *The Croydon Times* reviewer was also positive and referred to 'the remarkably fine display of the kinematograph [...] the three views of Croydon being especially interesting'. The reviewer would apparently have gone into more detail concerning the display but he explained that 'pressure on our space precludes a more lengthy notice'.⁷⁸ Although these reviews do not describe which local films were shown, it is likely that the programme was similar to that given at the Church Institute Bazaar the previous month⁷⁹ and this is supported by the *Croydon Society Gossip* which pointed out that 'the pictures have been seen before in Croydon, therefore a detailed reference is unnecessary. Suffice it to say that all were on a much larger scale than usual and that the demonstration was received with immense approval by all present'.⁸⁰

Croydon Camera Club Revisited

A second film exhibition was arranged for the Croydon Camera Club on Wednesday 27 January, possibly at Breadon House, 106 George Street, which had become the new Club premises at the end of 1896.⁸¹ This move to bigger premises was indicative of a growing membership of the Croydon Camera Club. Langfier demonstrated the improved model of the Grand Kinematograph to the members and even showed a local film of *Skaters on Morland Park Lake*, which he had apparently filmed that morning.⁸² The *Croydon Society Gossip* described the demonstration as a 'striking tour de force on his part to show a set of 1,200 photos taken on the self-same day'.⁸³ A report in *The British Journal of Photography*

⁷⁵ *Era*, 23 January 1897, p. 14.

⁷⁶ *CSG*, 20 January 1897, p. 13.

⁷⁷ *CA*, 23 January 1897, p. 5.

⁷⁸ *CT*, 16 January 1897, p. 5.

⁷⁹ See Appendix 2 (iii) for a table of films exhibited by Langfier, including three films of Croydon exhibited in December 1896 at the Church Institute Bazaar.

⁸⁰ *CSG*, 20 January 1897, p. 13.

⁸¹ Keane, *The Story of The Croydon Camera Club*.

⁸² *CSG*, 3 February 1897, p. 15.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

focussed mainly on the technological improvements in the apparatus, which included less power, noise and flicker, resulting in steadier pictures.⁸⁴ We also know from this report that around fifty members of the Camera Club saw the apparatus in action and Mr. T. J. Harrison was also present to explain the difficulties he had encountered attempting to perfect the machine on behalf of Bender & Company. This suggests that even if there had been some confusion concerning the origins of the apparatus, there was no ill-will between the Harrisons and the Croydon firm.

Dick Whittington

Pantomime was a theatrical spectacle that had developed in the eighteenth century as a combination of music, dancing, comedy and fairy-tale stories. It owed much to the Italian tradition of *commedia dell'arte* ('comedy of the artists') which was an improvised performance which took place *al fresco*. By the end of the nineteenth century pantomimes in Britain were often presented in theatres for long stretches of time, sometimes for up to a couple of months straddling at least Christmas and New Year. Alternatively a pantomime company might spend a week or two at one theatre, before moving on to another venue as part of a tour. *Dick Whittington* was one such touring pantomime that came on tour to the Theatre Royal in Croydon for two weeks from around 8 February 1897. Under the direction of Mr J. D. Hunter, the pantomime programme included ballet, canine wonders, musical entertainment, living statues and animated photographs. In their review the *Croydon Society Gossip* was particularly positive about the cinematograph:

the list of specialities is 'as long as one's arm.' First and foremost, there is one of the best exhibitions of animated photographs I have ever seen. Judging by the manner in which these pictures have been received during the week, it is clear the public are not tired of them yet by a long way. There are one or two humorous hits in these pictures which prove immensely popular.⁸⁵

Towards the end of the engagement *The Era* also declared that 'Mr G. A. Smith's animated photographs are prominent features in a delightful show'.⁸⁶ George Albert Smith had a background in hypnotism and magic lantern exhibitions and lectures, and went on to become 'one of the most important figures in Victorian cinema'⁸⁷ by virtue of his

⁸⁴ *BJP*, 44.1918 (5 February 1897), p. 94.

⁸⁵ *CSG*, 10 February 1897, p. 12.

⁸⁶ *Era*, 20 February 1897, p. 24.

⁸⁷ Stephen Herbert, *Who's Who of Victorian Cinema*, p. 135.

imaginative and technical film-making abilities. It transpires that Smith was on tour with his wife Laura Bayley (playing the part of Algernon Fitz Plushington) and his sister-in-law Blanche Bayley. Along with their other two sisters, they often featured in pantomimes managed by Mr Hunter during the 1880s and 1890s.⁸⁸

The pantomime was certainly a novel exhibition context in which to show animated pictures, and a creative way of incorporating films into a popular entertainment format. It would have fitted in well given the focus on technology, and would perhaps have seemed almost magical. It was not a unique approach, however, as Robert Paul is known to have exhibited the Theatrograph as part of a pantomime in Brighton's Theatre Royal which commenced on Christmas Day 1896. The Theatrograph occupied the penultimate 'scene' in *The Babes in the Wood and Robin Hood* and Gray considers why the overall format of the pantomime complimented the cinematograph:

This was a perfect showcase for Paul and his films as it was an opportunity to integrate his 'time machine' into a fairytale world constructed out of traditional and electrical stagecraft and defined by a very particular sense of wonder and spectacle.⁸⁹

Gray reveals that 'in 1896, in Britain, no other instant has been found of film being incorporated into a Christmas pantomime'.⁹⁰ Smith was also quick to use this innovative exhibition approach, and trailed Paul in this endeavour by only a few weeks. A dress rehearsal of *Dick Whittington* took place on Hastings Pier on Wednesday 23 December, but there was no mention of Smith and the animated photos on the line-up.⁹¹ However by the time *Dick Whittington* was being presented at the Prince of Wales's Royal Theatre in Southampton in mid-late January, he was a fixture on the programme'.⁹² Given that Smith hailed from Hove, close to Brighton, it may be that he got wind of the inclusion of Paul's Theatrograph in the Brighton pantomime and seized upon the idea. Research by John Barnes suggests that in 1897 Smith initially used apparatus constructed by Alfred Darling, and this was ready and available by 9 January.⁹³ Consequently, Smith's engagement with the pantomime would have been one of the earliest opportunities for him to have exhibited

⁸⁸ Frank Gray, 'Smith the Showman: The Early Years of George Albert Smith', *Film History*, 10.1 (1998), 8-20 (p. 13).

⁸⁹ Popple, Simon and Vanessa Toulmin, eds, *Visual Delights Two. Exhibition and Reception* (Eastleigh: John Libbey Publishing, 2005), p. 230.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ *Hastings & St Leonards Observer*, 26 December 1896, p. 6.

⁹² *Era*, 23 January 1897, p. 24.

⁹³ Barnes, vol. 2, p. 83.

films. Although the reviews were extremely positive, sadly there is no mention of the actual films that were shown. What is certain, however, is that the speed at which Smith successfully exhibited films in such a high-profile type of entertainment is indicative of his skill and confidence with the technology of the cinematograph at the very start of his career in this medium.

David Prosser Roberts

The Croydon Camera Club held its thirtieth public lantern slide display on Wednesday 17 February at the Braithwaite Hall⁹⁴ which evidently ‘drew another big audience, there being much difficulty in accommodating all who wanted to see’.⁹⁵ The cost of admission was sixpence and one shilling. The display finished with an exhibition of ten moving photographs which were provided and worked by David Prosser Roberts, a local member of the club. Prosser Roberts was the director of P. Rhosser Roberts, Ltd, chemists in Croydon. His obituary recorded three decades later in *The Chemist and Druggist* mentioned that he was an early pioneer of radiography and carried out X-ray work at Croydon General Hospital.⁹⁶ *The British Journal of Photography* reviewed Prosser-Roberts’ Croydon display and listed several of the films, which by their generic titles could be perhaps Paul or Edison films:

the large assemblage was evidently greatly delighted, as well they might be. Amongst the best of the scenes were the Railway Station, Cycling, and Skirt Dancer, the last-named being so coloured as to exhibit the prismatic changes produced by red, green, and otherwise tinted limelight.⁹⁷

The *Croydon Society Gossip* also reviewed the animated photographs and described them as ‘quite up to the present level of excellence’ and ‘unusually brightly illuminated’.⁹⁸ The reviewer did, however, make the following creative suggestion:

it would add to the pleasure of the audience if, on future occasions, when the moving photos are shown, between each scene either a short piano selection be run through or an ordinary lantern slide be thrown on to the screen. On

⁹⁴ *CSG*, 10 February 1897, p. 8.

⁹⁵ *BJP*, 44.1921 (26 February 1897), p. 141.

⁹⁶ *Chemist and Druggist*, 114.21 (23 May 1931), p. 604.

⁹⁷ *BJP*, 44.1921 (26 February 1897), p. 141.

⁹⁸ *CSG*, 24 February 1897, p. 4.

Wednesday the nine waits, though not long ones, were answerable for the loss of about a quarter of an hour.⁹⁹

We will see that Prosser also exhibited animated pictures the following week in Woolwich and we know that his film programme there included *The Church Parade*, so it is quite possible that this film was also shown in Croydon.¹⁰⁰

Banks and Greaves

Animated pictures were next shown in Croydon on 4 March 1897 at the Public Hall. Messrs. Banks and Greaves, of whom we will hear much more later,¹⁰¹ gave an entertainment under the auspices of the Croydon Literary and Scientific Institution. Subscribers could attend for free; otherwise entrance cost either one shilling and sixpence or two shillings and sixpence which suggests it was targeting a middle-class audience.¹⁰² Overall, it appears that there was greater focus on their dioramic tour 'England to America' as an advertisement in *The Croydon Advertiser* failed to refer to animated pictures,¹⁰³ and a subsequent review described the tour but simply referred to the animated pictures as 'up-to-date'.¹⁰⁴ Consequently we do not have a record from Croydon sources of which films were shown or how they were received. It has, however, been possible to compile a list of films that they were showing in other locations in this period. Consequently we have a good indication of the types of films Banks and Greaves had access to in this period and might possibly have shown in Croydon.¹⁰⁵

The Velograph

Animated pictures were shown later that month as part of a Croydon Camera Club display of photographs. On this occasion the Small Public Hall was the venue and the exhibition on Wednesday 24 March was in aid of the Croydon General Hospital. The animated pictures were shown by Langfier at the end of the display so the machine was presumably the Grand Kinematograph but no more information is known at present.¹⁰⁶ From an inspection of the weekly advertisements and reviews in the local press it appears that there

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ See Chapter Three of this thesis, p. 93.

¹⁰¹ Chapter Two of this thesis refers to an entertainment they provided in Ealing. Chapter Six is a case study of the Banks and Greaves partnership.

¹⁰² CA, 27 February 1897, p. 5.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ CA, 6 March 1897, p. 8.

¹⁰⁵ See Appendix 7 for a comprehensive list of films known to have been exhibited by Horace Banks during 1896 and 1897.

¹⁰⁶ BJP, 44.1926 (2 April 1897), p. 221.

was a gap of four months before animated pictures were commercially exhibited in Croydon again. The local Velograph Company were once again responsible for exhibiting the 'Wonderful Velograph' as one of the 'Stupendous Attractions!'¹⁰⁷ at the National Palace of Varieties for the August Bank Holiday. It was a two-week engagement from Monday 2 August,¹⁰⁸ with admission prices ranging from sixpence to three shillings for the mixed variety entertainment.¹⁰⁹ In June 1897 the Grand Kinematograph had been renamed the Velograph and the cinematographic operations of Bender & Company were assumed by the Velograph Syndicate Limited.¹¹⁰ Langfier took the helm as managing director of this new entity whilst continuing his partnership with Bender.¹¹¹

At the National Palace of Varieties the Velograph was the main feature, with the apparatus distinctively highlighted in bold amongst the list of entertainments and advertised as a 'Special and Most Expensive Engagement'.¹¹² It is also clear from the programme that the Velograph was exhibited mid-way through the evening's entertainment and therefore occupied prime place in the line-up. The largest and boldest font of all the acts was applied to 'THE VELOGRAPH' and 'THE DIAMOND JUBILEE', and a review in *The Era* described how 'the Velograph animated photographs are received with applause',¹¹³ while *The Croydon Advertiser* reported how the programme of animated photographs, including the Jubilee Procession, were 'voted a real treat'.¹¹⁴ The reviewer went so far as to say that they were some of the best films they had witnessed, which was glowing praise indeed considering the acclaimed Theatrograph was exhibited in Croydon less than a year earlier. *The Croydon Times* provided a comprehensive review of the entertainment along with details of the films that were shown:

the house was packed. [...] The Velograph series of animated photographs were much appreciated, selections from the following views being given:- The Diamond Jubilee procession, her Majesty the Queen and Royal Family at the state garden party, Buckingham Palace, the Royal Regatta, Henley, 1897, the

¹⁰⁷ *CT*, 31 July 1897, p. 4.

¹⁰⁸ *CA*, 7 August 1897, p. 5; *CT*, 7 August 1897, p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ *CT*, 31 July 1897, p. 4.

¹¹⁰ Barnes, *vol. 2*, p. 45.

¹¹¹ *Photographic Dealer*, 4-5 (1898), p. 68.

¹¹² Programme for the National Palace Theatre of Varieties, 9 August 1897, reprinted in Barnes, *vol. 2*, p. 194. The programme is held in the National Media Museum, Bradford and appears to be a newspaper clipping.

¹¹³ *Era*, 7 August 1897, p. 7.

¹¹⁴ *CA*, 14 August 1897, p. 8.

Derby, 1897, the Ascot Gold Cup, 1897, the Flying Scotchman,¹¹⁵ the Seaside Military Drill, and London Life. The pictures are some of the best that we have witnessed, and to those who did not see the procession we strongly recommend a visit to the Hall this week.¹¹⁶

It is worth noting that the reviewer is not necessarily referring to films that made an impression on him but simply replicating the list of films recorded on a programme for the variety hall.¹¹⁷ The films included events of a newsworthy, sporting and regal nature. Topical actualities are emphasised rather than the local Croydon views, which reflects the types of films that the Velograph Company were increasingly producing¹¹⁸ and perhaps also shows a desire of the part on the National Palace of Varieties to provide a refined entertainment and appeal to a sophisticated clientele. It is also interesting that the film of the Jubilee Procession was judged reason enough to attend the variety venue. A number of recently filmed pictures were shown which were key items in the summer sporting calendar and there would surely have been excitement amongst the Croydon audiences to have the opportunity to experience these events through the medium of film. The year 1897 was emphasised for the sporting films which served to underscore how up-to-date the pictures were, particularly when the 1896 version of the Derby was still doing the rounds. Although local films were not mentioned, one film with a connection to the manager of the National Palace of Varieties was introduced when the programme was altered the following week to include 'new pictures, one of which depicts Miss Ida Baily in an Indian skirt dance (that lady being the wife of Mr. Lennon, the popular manager)'.¹¹⁹ It is worth noting that the evening's entertainment also included the ventriloquist Walter Cole, who was known for exhibiting Paul's Theatrograph as part of his programme, but the Theatrograph was not included here and Cole was pitched purely as 'the great ventriloquist'.¹²⁰

In the press reports there was no mention of Langfier being present in person for this exhibition of the Velograph. It is possible that the projectionist was Albany Ward who had

¹¹⁵ The Flying Scotsman is an express train which runs between London and Edinburgh and was also known as The Flying Scotchman in this period.

¹¹⁶ *CT*, 7 August 1897, p. 2.

¹¹⁷ Programme for the National Palace Theatre of Varieties, 9 August 1897, reprinted in Barnes, *vol. 2*, p. 194. The sequence of the film titles is the same in the review and the programme except that the latter implies that *The Seaside* and *Military Drill* are separate films, which would seem more logical.

¹¹⁸ Appendix 2 (iii) includes a list of films exhibited in Croydon by Langfier on the Grand Kinematograph and Velograph in 1896 and 1897. It is clear from the chronological list that during this period Langfier was moving away from showing local films to showing predominantly actualities.

¹¹⁹ *CT*, 11 August 1897, p. 5.

¹²⁰ *CT*, 7 August 1897, p. 4.

joined the Velograph Company in August 1897 and is known to have exhibited at the National Palace in Croydon.¹²¹ Film historian Rachael Low provided an excerpt of his reminiscences in her *History of the British Film*:

I was appointed principal operator to the Velograph Company, as well as working in printing and developing rooms by day and on one of my first jobs was to exhibit pictures on the Syndicate halls at the Palace, Croydon, Metropolitan, Edgware Road, Tivoli and various other Syndicate halls as a Music Hall Turn. At that time on the Music Halls we showed from behind through a transparent screen, viz. a fine calico screen which was thoroughly damped with water and glycerine. This screen which was stretched on a frame which with travelled with us [...] I stayed with the Velograph Company for some months, during which time, after the Music Hall engagements, we toured the provinces with a special show which included the Diamond Jubilee pictures, and the programme was augmented with a vocalist and entertainer.¹²²

An examination of local newspaper advertisements and reviews indicates that the Velograph did not become a regular feature at the National Palace of Varieties during the remainder of 1897 and there appears to be no further mention of the Velograph until December 1897 when it was exhibited in a different Croydon variety hall.

The Lumière Triograph

The National Palace of Varieties next exhibited animated pictures in September 1897. On this occasion the Lumière Triograph was shown as part of a programme of 'VAST AND VARIED VARIETIES',¹²³ with admission prices ranging from sixpence to three shillings. The engagement commenced on Monday 27 September and continued until circa Saturday 9 October. This suggests that despite being well-received the theatre was not inclined to invest solely in the Velograph on a regular basis at this stage but preferred to engage a variety of machines and exhibitors. The Triograph projector used the Edison gauge perforation and was first exhibited in London in July. According to Barnes 'this new projector was not available at first on the open market, but was reserved for special

¹²¹ For an excellent account of Albany Ward and his relationship with the Velograph Company see Patricia Cook, 'Albany Ward and the Development of Cinema Exhibition in England', *Film History*, 20.3 (2008), 294-307.

¹²² Rachael Low and Roger Manvell, *The History of the British Film, 1896-1906* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1948, second impression 1973), p. 115.

¹²³ CA, 25 September 1897, p. 5.

exploitation at leading theatres'.¹²⁴ The exhibition in Croydon occurred within a week of the first anniversary of the opening of the National Palace of Varieties and may also have been a reaction to the launch of a rival variety hall in Croydon on Monday 20 September. For the first time, the National Palace of Varieties had direct competition locally from a venue offering a similar type of entertainment. The Empire Theatre of Varieties (formerly the Theatre Royal) opened in Croydon to decent reviews, with *The Croydon Times* commenting: 'There is no doubt about it, the "Empire" is an accomplished fact, and has come to stay'.¹²⁵ The Empire had been refurbished ready for its launch, in the style of the French Renaissance with crimson plush upholstery throughout the stalls and grand circle, and a warm red Brussels carpet on the floor.¹²⁶

Not only did the National Palace of Varieties now have to contend with competition from a new local variety hall opening, but it was noted in the press that despite offering entertainments of a high-class character, the National Palace of Varieties needed to manage some audience vulgarity from time to time:

We are glad to observe [...] that the management are taking steps to discourage the rowdyism that has sometimes interfered with the pleasure of visitors to the hall. One does not, of course, expect a music hall audience to observe the decorum that characterizes a Wesleyan chapel; but there is a vast difference between the lusty singing of a chorus, for example, and the shouting of ribald and even unpublishable remarks. It will be to the best interests of the management to discourage this kind of thing with a strong hand.¹²⁷

Things had evidently gone downhill somewhat as a description in the *Croydon Society Gossip* five months earlier suggested that the Palace 'affords a pleasing contrast to the majority of variety houses, where rowdiness is only too often a deplorable feature' and 'there is a delightful freedom from whistling, cat calls, and so on'.¹²⁸

In light of new competition from the Empire, the National Palace of Varieties must have thought it had secured a coup by exhibiting a Lumière machine, but the quality of this latest projector was evidently an issue:

¹²⁴ Barnes, *vol. 2*, p. 126.

¹²⁵ *CT*, 13 October 1897, p. 5.

¹²⁶ *CSG*, 15 September 1897, p. 13.

¹²⁷ *CT*, 6 October 1897, p. 5.

¹²⁸ *CSG*, 19 May 1897, p. 11.

Much was expected from the display by [the] Lumiere [*sic*] Triograph, a variant of the widely known Kinematograph, but unfortunately the display was not quite so good as it should have been, there being much vibration of the pictures presented. We believe that the reason for this was that the electricity was supplied from the same source which supplies the street illumination, and proved not to be powerful enough. [...] The defect will be remedied for the remainder of the week and as the exhibition includes a complete view of the Diamond Jubilee procession, an interesting spectacle is sure to be provided.¹²⁹

The *Croydon Society Gossip* also noted that ‘the apparatus was a trifle out of gear on Monday night owing to some unforeseen trouble with the limelight, but last night this was remedied and the pictures were received with immense applause’.¹³⁰ Despite this, the reviewer was extremely positive and included valuable information about the technical side of the display, and so is worth reproducing in detail:

The big turn of the programme is the Lumiere Triograph which is certainly the best thing of the ‘graph’ kind that has been seen in Croydon. The apparatus is worked from the back of the hall, like the old-fashioned magic lantern, and the pictures, which are thrown on a sheet on the stage, are consequently larger. Each picture [...] fills the entire proscenium opening, and each is remarkably good. The outlines are clear and distinct, and the movements of the figures are well defined. There is an entire absence of the irritating ‘flicker’ of occasional white patches that so disfigure most of the machines of this kind and the running of the machine is hardly audible even when the band is not playing, which is a blessing. One of the best pictures shown is the interior of a swimming bath, with diving from a high spring board into deep water. This is life-like in the extreme, every figure coming out sharp and strong. Other good specimens are a seascape showing waves breaking on a rock, a cavalry charge, cavalry at jumping practice across country, and a string of the inevitable Jubilee procession scenes.¹³¹

This particular reviewer clearly sounds very knowledgeable and must have had some experience of watching different cinematograph displays. Having been disappointed in the

¹²⁹ *CT*, 29 September 1897, p. 8.

¹³⁰ *CSG*, 29 September 1897, p. 13.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

past with the noise of apparatus, the flickering of films or images appearing indistinct, the Triograph evidently suffered from no such issues once the complications with the electricity were resolved. This also indicates that simply watching movement on screen was no longer the prime concern. We see a pre-occupation with the quality of apparatus emerging, and an associated emphasis on the complete or holistic viewing experience.

The following week the *Croydon Society Gossip* commented that the Triograph 'has proved an immense success and many of the pictures are encored every night, especially the military steeplechase. Several new scenes have been introduced this week. There can be no doubt about the success of the apparatus now'.¹³² It is possible that the military steeplechase was one of a series of Lumière films recording military exercises at the Saumur military school in western France in the summer of 1897, such as *Saut de la haie*.



Fig. 1.6 Still from *Saut de la haie*, 1897
'Saut De La Haie', *Catalogue Lumière*, 2013 <<http://catalogue-lumiere.com/saut-de-la-haie/>>
[accessed 24 September 2015]

We know that the pictures were projected on an impressively large screen which filled the proscenium opening. This was not unusual, as the Washington Theatre of Varieties in Battersea also utilised the full proscenium when the Triograph was exhibited there in the summer of 1897.¹³³ It is likely that George Francis acted as the guide and

¹³² *CSG*, 6 October 1897, p. 12.

¹³³ Barnes, *vol. 2*, p. 127.

technical director in Croydon as he was involved with several Lumière exhibitions in this period.¹³⁴

Showcasing the cinematograph

On the evening of Wednesday 24 November 1897 the Croydon Microscopical and Natural History Club held their twenty-eighth Annual Soirée in the Public Hall which included a cinematograph demonstration. The club promoted the study of science and local and natural history, and in 1897 had a membership of two hundred and thirty seven, of which thirteen members were ladies.¹³⁵ The Soirée was an opportunity for members to showcase their collections and to contribute exhibits and displays. The Club President, Dr. Hobson, described the cinematograph show:

There were several shows given during the evening, alternating with the cinematograph, furnished by Messrs. Noakes and Norman of Greenwich, Mr. Norman giving the demonstration himself, the Royal Artillery in Jubilee procession and the snowballing incident being much applauded, as indeed their excellence deserved.¹³⁶

Mr G. P. Norman had taken over the business of D. Noakes & Son early in 1897 selling cinematograph equipment and films, as well as other optical equipment, under the business name of 'Noakes and Norman'.¹³⁷ Given that the firm had a large selection of Lumière subjects available with Edison perforations, it is quite possible that the snowballing incident was the Lumière film *Bataille de neige* from circa 1896-1897 which featured a number of people having a snowball fight in the street, and knocking down a cyclist.¹³⁸ John Barnes has identified at least eighteen film-makers who are likely to have covered the Jubilee, including Lumière, and so it is difficult to identify with certainty the Royal Artillery film. Lumière is, however, known to have produced *Royal Horse Artillery with Guns* which was available in the Edison perforation.¹³⁹

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp. 124-130.

¹³⁵ *Proceedings & Transactions of the Croydon Microscopical & Natural History Club 1897-1898* (London: West, Newman & Co.), p. 137.

¹³⁶ Ibid., pp. 145-146.

¹³⁷ Barnes, vol. 2, pp. 64-65.

¹³⁸ The film is available to view online: 'Bataille De Neige', *Catalogue Lumière*, 2013 <<http://catalogue-lumiere.com/bataille-de-neige>> [accessed 24 September 2015].

¹³⁹ Fuerst Bros., letter dated 30 June 1897 detailing the Lumière films they had available for sale, reprinted in Stephen Herbert, Colin Harding and Simon Popple, eds, *Victorian Film Catalogues, A Facsimile Collection* (London: The Projection Box, 1996), p. 16.

It is interesting that there was no mention of animated pictures being exhibited at the Annual Soirée the previous year in November 1896, when an exhibition of Röntgen rays by Messrs. Watson & Sons was regarded as ‘the most popular exhibition’.¹⁴⁰ This is somewhat surprising given that animated pictures and X-rays had been in the public eye for a similar amount of time by that stage. Following the 1896 Soirée, *The Croydon Chronicle* described how ‘there was an evident desire on the part of the visitors to again witness the [X-ray] demonstrations, in spite of the exhortations of the operator to ‘pass on gentlemen, when you have seen the rays’.’¹⁴¹ The impact of X-rays during the early years of animated photography exhibition is considered in more depth in Chapter Four of this thesis.

The Cinématographe-Lumière

Lumière apparatus was seen again in Croydon only two months later, as part of a lantern show organised by the Croydon Camera Club. On Wednesday 8 December the Small Public Hall played host to members’ slides and an hour-long performance of the Cinématographe-Lumière (the precursor to the Triograph). The film section of the evening was promoted by Nestlé and Lever Brothers which means that for the first time in Croydon we see the partnering of business and film for promotional purposes. This was an interesting development as until now film exhibitions in Croydon were operated by individuals for instructive or entertainment purposes. Yet here we see a highly entrepreneurial move with two companies joining forces to promote their products through the medium of film. This innovative method of advertising was noted in *The Era* following a similar engagement in Norwich where the Lumière film programme was interspersed with a clip of a Sunlight Soap washing competition and a film featuring Nestlé’s milk factory.¹⁴² A poster advertising the entertainment in Chelmsford in October shows that admission was sixpence but ‘All persons presenting a Nestlé’s Milk or Sunlight Soap Wrapper will be admitted at HALF-PRICE’.¹⁴³ The Chelmsford and Norwich engagements were under the management of Mr. H. Spencer Clarke and were clearly commercial, so it is curious that the Croydon Camera Club’s lantern show was considered a suitable forum for this type of promotional entertainment. It is likely that Spencer Clarke also managed the Croydon entertainment and perhaps he simply took a share of the overall profits from the lantern show.

¹⁴⁰ *Proceedings & Transactions of the Croydon Microscopical & Natural History Club*, p. 125.

¹⁴¹ CC, 28 November 1896, p. 5.

¹⁴² Barnes, vol. 2, p. 168.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 196.

At least forty different animated photographs were promised,¹⁴⁴ several of which were mentioned in *The British Journal of Photography*, and particular favourites included *The Bull Fight*, *The Visit of President Faure to the Czar* and *The Fire Alarm*. A train view was also singled out for more detailed appraisal and apparently caused the audience to be ‘uproariously delighted’.¹⁴⁵ Overall the film exhibition was ‘well appreciated by an audience which has now had considerable experience of this photographic development’.¹⁴⁶ The *Croydon and Surrey Gossip* declared that the animated photographs ‘were in the most respect the best yet shown in Croydon; whether for abundance, novelty, or perfection of projection they ‘take the cracker’.’¹⁴⁷ The publication also mentioned ‘a view taken from the window of an express train’ which could possibly be the 1896 film *Panorama de l’arrivée en gare de Perrache pris du train*. *Jimmy on the Chute* and *The Lost Cigar* were also highlighted. The latter is likely to be the Lumière film *Le Cigar Introuvable* which featured three clowns squabbling over a cigar.¹⁴⁸ *Jimmy on the Chute* is not a recognisable film title in the Lumière catalogue but it could possibly be *Le Water Tobogant* which was filmed in 1896.¹⁴⁹



Fig. 1.7 Still from *Le cigare introuvable*, c. 1897
‘Le Cigare Introuvable’, *Catalogue Lumière*, 2013 <<http://catalogue-lumiere.com/le-cigare-introuvable/>> [accessed 24 September 2015]

¹⁴⁴ *CSG*, 7 December 1897, p. 7.

¹⁴⁵ *BJP*, 44.1963 (17 December 1897), p. 811.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *CSG*, 14 December 1897, p. 5. *Croydon Society Gossip* was renamed *Croydon and Surrey Gossip* from 9 November 1897.

¹⁴⁸ The film is extant and available to view online: ‘Films Lumiere 1’, *YouTube*, 2015 <https://youtu.be/O_wj58LhApI> [accessed 24 September 2015].

¹⁴⁹ The musical comedy ‘A Gaiety Girl’ featured a well-known song called ‘Jimmy on the Chute’ about a diligent boy who is taken to a ‘water-chute’ by his grandmother as a distraction from his studies. So this film title may simply have been a music-hall reference which audience members may have been familiar with. Lumière’s film *Le Water Tobogant* is available to view online: ‘1896 - Water Toboggan - Louis Lumiere - Montagnes Russes Sur L’eau’, *YouTube*, 2015 <<https://youtu.be/O9cfLu6Jrpw>> [accessed 24 September 2015].

It is worth noting that the audience in this instance was not purely the general public but would have been predominantly Camera Club members with a special interest in photography and who had been afforded several opportunities to witness animated photography during the previous twelve months.

Queen Victoria's Glorious Reign

Banks and Greaves were due to re-visit Croydon the following day on Thursday 9 December to give an entertainment at the Public Hall about 'Queen Victoria's Glorious Reign'.¹⁵⁰ As with their previous March engagement, it is likely admission was free to subscribers, with a charge for non-subscribers. The entertainment was to feature limelight views and animated photographs but unfortunately it does not appear to have been reviewed in the local press. Given the title of their entertainment on this occasion, it is likely that Banks at least showed the film *Queen's Diamond Jubilee Procession* on the Vivaceographe projector.¹⁵¹

The Velograph at The Empire

The Empire in Croydon neglected to exhibit animated pictures as part of its inaugural programme in September and it was not until Christmas that they formed part of the variety bill. This new entertainment venue could accommodate an audience of 2,500 sitting and standing¹⁵² and *The Croydon Times* provides an impression of the clientele frequenting the venue:

the class of entertainment here is imposing and naturally drawing larger houses every week. The gallery people here, too, are of an intellectual class, well behaved, and appreciative of the turns which are not brainless buffoonery. This is a distinct advantage to the numerous patrons in the highest priced parts of the house.¹⁵³

With admission prices ranging from sixpence to two shillings, the venue was clearly out to attract a diverse audience including the middle-classes, which explains why *The Croydon Times* deemed it necessary to allay any fears the higher-paying patrons may have held concerning the 'gallery people'. Films were shown as part of the 'Grand Christmas

¹⁵⁰ *CSG*, 29 September 1897, p. 8.

¹⁵¹ See Appendix 7 for a list of films that Banks was showing during 1896 and 1897, and from which he could have made film selections for this Croydon exhibition.

¹⁵² *CT*, 1 January 1898, p. 2.

¹⁵³ *CT*, 25 December 1897, p. 5.

Programme' with 'morning and evening performances of the Langfior [*sic*] Cinematographe' on Monday 27 December 1897.¹⁵⁴ This was obviously Adolphe Langfior's Velograph projector. Simply described as 'new and splendid pictures',¹⁵⁵ unfortunately there is no detailed information concerning the films that were shown or the audience reception of them. The line-up was probably similar to the programme of Velograph films shown at the National Palace of Varieties in August.¹⁵⁶

Conclusion

A thorough investigation of Croydon newspaper reviews and advertisements has provided an insight into how film shows were advertised, the frequency of exhibition, the types of films shown, the venues in which they were exhibited, and how they were appreciated by the paying public. Paul's Theatrograph was not the first apparatus to project films on screen in Croydon in 1896, and a Lumière projector did not appear until the autumn of 1897. Despite limited accessibility to these celebrated machines, Croydonians (especially members of the Camera Club) had the opportunity to see films reasonably frequently due to a range of lesser-known exhibitors targeting this suburban town.

The character of the audiences varied due to the diverse settings in which films were exhibited. Whilst the Camera Club meetings appealed to middle-class men with an interest in photography, venues such as the National Palace of Varieties and the Empire Theatre of Varieties attracted a blend of middle-class and working-class male and female patrons seeking an afternoon or evening's entertainment. Other than the first exhibition of films in Croydon at the Horniman Hall in September 1896, all the commercial exhibitions in this period were part of a mixed entertainment programme, even if the venue was not part of the variety hall circuit. Admittance prices were determined by the type of venue and entertainment on offer, with the public paying from sixpence to as much as three shillings to see films alongside other variety amusements. We do not know the attendance numbers for the standalone film exhibition at the Horniman Hall, but the fact that tickets were advertised at sixpence suggests that the exhibitor believed there was a market for viewing exclusively films at that price, without a variety element.

The first two exhibitions of films in Croydon utilised sensational language in their press advertisements. Taglines such as 'The Wonder of the Age!' and 'The Biggest Sensation of the Century!' were guaranteed to catch the eye. Advertisements also appealed to suburban sensibilities by emphasising that this new technology had taken London by

¹⁵⁴ CA, 23 December 1897, p. 4.

¹⁵⁵ CT, 29 December 1897, p. 5.

¹⁵⁶ See Appendix 2 (iii) for a list of films exhibited by Langfior in August 1897.

storm. Initially the cinematograph did cause a sensation in Croydon and lived up to the promises made by such slogans, but by the end of 1896 we begin to see an emerging discourse concerning the quality of apparatus as the novelty factor diminished and the overall quality of the viewing experience became of greater importance to audiences. As the general public gained a greater understanding of animated photography we see less extreme language and exclamations being used in Croydon advertisements in 1897.

There was a strong seasonal impact with films often coinciding with Christmas and public holidays, but that meant that months could often pass by without an appearance by the cinematograph. The National Palace of Varieties showed films on less than a handful of occasions during 1896 and 1897, and this limited schedule of film exhibition appears to have been a conscious strategy by the management whereby they withheld cinematograph bookings and showed them strategically as a special attraction when the need arose. As the only variety hall theatre in Croydon during 1896 and much of 1897, the National Palace of Varieties held a monopoly and was under no obligation to show the new novelty of films on a regular basis – it could fill its auditorium nightly with standard variety and music hall turns. The inclusion of films was therefore infrequent but well-timed to coincide with key events affecting the hall. In a calculated move guaranteed to draw in the crowds, the venue employed the Theatrograph for its opening night in October 1896. The 1897 August Bank Holiday period, when the hall was competing with outdoor attractions and excursions, was also a prime occasion on which to engage the Velograph. And it cannot be coincidence that the Palace of Varieties chose to re-instate films around the time of its first anniversary in September 1897, within a week of the opening of the rival Empire Theatre of Varieties.

Although the Croydon Camera Club meetings were non-commercial in nature, their importance cannot be overstated as they formed a sizeable proportion of the number of film exhibitions in Croydon during 1896 and 1897. In fact, the Camera Club was responsible for one third of the local exhibitions in this period, providing additional opportunities for people to experience films in Croydon. The Camera Club embraced the new photography and kept members abreast of developments in this area by means of demonstrations and lectures. Although attendance at the private meetings did not represent a wide cross-section of the Croydon populace, follow-up reports in the local newspapers would have helped to raise awareness and keep the cinematograph in the public eye. The two public lantern shows which bookended 1897 also enabled a greater range of people to experience animated photography than was usually possible at the private meetings.

The Camera Club demonstrations emphasised instruction and education, focussing on the technology and development of apparatus, although it is clear that films were also

enjoyed for their subject matter as well. In an unusually commercial move, the Camera Club was responsible for bringing the Cinématographe-Lumière to the town in December 1897, under the backing of Nestlé and Lever Brothers. The Camera Club was also crucial to the development of the Grand Kinematograph, and it appears to have been at the Club's lantern show in January 1897 that the Grand Kinematograph was first exhibited in public in Croydon. This was a safe environment in which Langfier could demonstrate his cinematograph, enabling him to gather feedback from like-minded people before unveiling the apparatus commercially. 1897 proved to be a crucial year for the Velograph in Croydon, with Langfier making a strong impact on the Croydon film exhibition scene. The apparatus was exhibited on six occasions that year under various guises. Croydonians were in an unusual situation of having the Velograph Company operating in their town which meant they had access to locally-produced films such as *Skaters on Morland Pond* and *Demolition of Old Railway Station*, which added another layer to their viewing experience.

A broad spectrum of films were shown in Croydon, including sporting and regal events, London views, comic scenes, variety turns, actualities, seaside and local views, and even some dramatic scenes. An analysis of the types of films exhibited does not show much change from one year to the next, and the only discernible difference was that local films were exhibited in 1897 following the arrival of the Velograph on the scene. A study of the local press reviews has brought to light several forgotten films. We can now add two additional films to Paul's repertoire – *Victoria Park* and *Queen's Park*. Another Velograph film has also been revealed featuring Ida Baily performing an Indian skirt dance. Ida was the wife of the manager of the National Palace of Varieties, so this was technically a local film and probably filmed as a courtesy, but it is none the less valid for that.

Films were shown in a variety of settings, including independent and public halls and commercial variety theatres, but in 1897 we begin to see a subtle shift towards the appropriation of films into the variety sector in Croydon as a highlight of the bill, rather than an added extra at the end of a night's entertainment. In spite of this, we have seen that by the end of 1897 the cinematograph had by no means become a regular part of variety entertainment in Croydon. Incidentally, at what would be the final engagement of the cinematograph in 1897, the entertainer Charles Chaplin had a spot on the Empire's festive bill as a 'comic and descriptive vocalist'.¹⁵⁷ Perhaps he caught a glimpse behind the scenes of the Velograph projecting images on to the temporary calico screen. Little could he know that his estranged eight-year-old son, Charlie, would be directing and starring in films less

¹⁵⁷ CA, 23 December 1897, p. 4.

than twenty years later, en route to becoming one of the most famous and iconic figures in the history of the film industry.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SENSATION OF THE AGE IN EALING

The first public screening of films in Ealing took place in November 1896, some nine months after the first central London screening. Animated pictures arrived in Ealing under the tag-line of 'THE SENSATION OF THE AGE!' but we will see, however, that the experience of watching films did not quite live up to this fanfare. The main Ealing newspaper of the period, *The Middlesex County Times*, frequently recorded details of public lectures illustrated by lantern slides and limelight views, and these would have provided a useful platform on which animated pictures could thrive. Nevertheless, film exhibition occurred in a limited number of venues in Ealing in 1896 and 1897 and it was a sluggish start, with only one engagement of animated pictures in 1896, and less than a handful of exhibitions the following year.

The Vivaceographe

The main venue for entertainment in Victorian Ealing was the Lyric Hall which was described as a 'pretty Bijou theatre'.¹ It had opened in 1881 as a concert hall and had become the Lyric Hall by 1883, establishing the equivalent of a theatre in Ealing which was licensed for music, dancing and stage plays. Mr T. J. Phillips became the general manager in 1895 with the aim 'to get down all the London successes as soon as they have proved to be successes'.² Animated pictures were exhibited on the 'Vivaceographe' by Messrs. Banks and Greaves at the Lyric in November 1896. Horace George Banks and Leonard William Greaves were opticians and dealers in photographic equipment, based in Clapham, South London.³ Their visit to Ealing generated some interest in the local press prior to their engagement, particularly as they were the first to show animated pictures in the town:

The programme next month includes a couple of particularly interesting entertainments arranged for Wednesday, the 11th prox., when Messrs. Banks and Greave [*sic*] will present a series of 'animated pictures.' In each of the scenes photographs are thrown on the screen at the rate of one thousand

¹ *MCT*, 8 January 1898, p. 4.

² *MCT*, 6 June 1896, p. 6.

³ The history of the Banks and Greaves partnership and their impact on film exhibition in this period will be explored in depth in Chapter Six of this thesis.

pictures a minute, in order to produce life-like motions on the part of the figures represented.⁴

This description is laced with the themes of movement, speed and action, particularly through the use of the word ‘thrown’ and the emphasis on the projection rate. The preview specifically stresses the marvel of how so many pictures are shown so quickly on screen. Although ‘one thousand pictures a minute’ sounds exaggerated, in fact it equates to approximately sixteen or seventeen frames a second which was a typical speed for film projection at the time. Banks and Greaves presumably re-named their apparatus for entertainment purposes and distinctiveness. The Italian word ‘vivace’ is used in musical scores to recommend a fast and lively interpretation, and comes from the Latin ‘vivax’, meaning lasting, enduring, brisk or lively. The English word ‘vivacious’, meaning full of animation, also stems from this Latin word. No doubt Banks and Greaves had this evocative meaning in mind when naming the Vivaceographe, a machine that was capable of endowing life by projecting films as if by magic.

An advert in the Ealing press proclaimed that the Vivaceographe had come ‘direct from ‘The Olympia’, London’.⁵ This was an embellishment as it will be seen in Chapter Six of this thesis that the Vivaceographe was exhibited in several other places between the Olympia and Ealing engagements. Previews in the local press also drew comparisons with another famous London variety institution, describing the animated photographs ‘as produced at the Empire’⁶ and ‘similar to those which have caused a sensation at the Empire and other London places of amusement’.⁷ This comparison with well-known London venues served to flatter potential Ealing audiences by emphasising that Ealing could enjoy all that central London had to offer. Such language also generated curiosity, encouraging people to witness for themselves an entertainment that was supposedly all the rage in London in the top music halls. Although the press had clearly grasped the principle of the Vivaceographe cinematograph, the arrival of animated pictures in Ealing was marked by some confusion.

There was uncertainty regarding the names of the exhibitors, as they were described variously in the Ealing press as Banks and Greave,⁸ Manks and Greave,⁹ and Monks and

⁴ *MCT*, 10 October 1896, p. 6.

⁵ *MCT*, 31 October 1896, p. 4.

⁶ *MCT*, 17 October 1896, p. 6.

⁷ *MCT*, 7 November 1896, p. 6.

⁸ *MCT*, 10 October 1896, p. 6.

⁹ *MCT*, 17 October 1896, p. 4.

Greaves.¹⁰ The final advertisement before the entertainment named only Horace Banks, so we do not know whether Greaves was actually present. His absence would not have been unusual, however, as Banks concentrated on the lecturing aspect of the partnership whilst Greaves focussed on the manufacturing side of their business. More confusion was evident as an advertisement (**Fig. 2.1**) suggests that the evening entertainment included ‘The New Photography (Rontgen X Rays)’.¹¹ A subsequent newspaper review does not mention any X-rays, so they may have been a simple advertising ploy to exploit the widespread public interest in them at that time.¹²

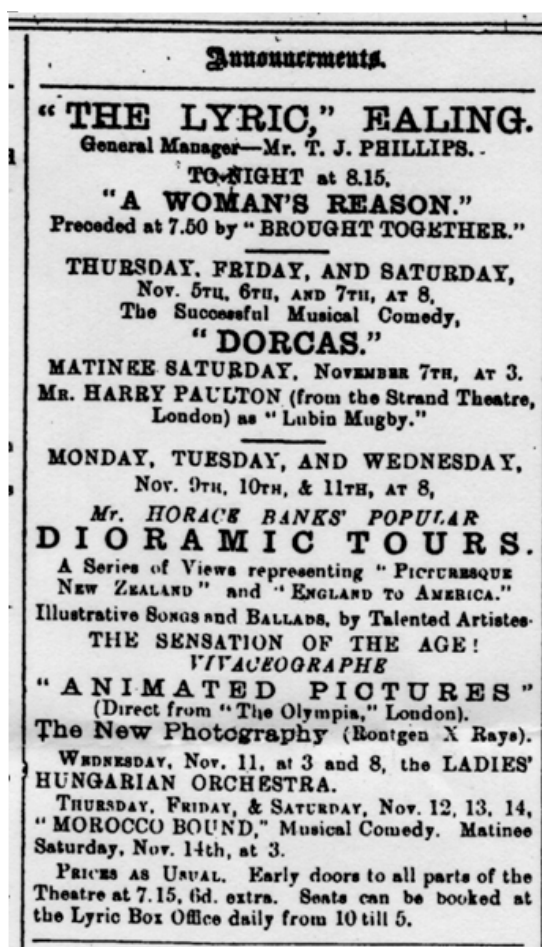


Fig. 2.1 Advertisement for The Lyric, *MCT*, 31 October 1896, p. 4.

The Vivaceographie was exhibited at the Lyric from Monday 9 November to Wednesday 11 November 1896, including a matinee on the final day. The cost of admittance was advertised as 'PRICES AS USUAL' and it is likely that the seats ranged from one to three shillings, as suggested in an advertisement for a different entertainment

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 6.

¹¹ *MCT*, 31 October 1896, p. 4.

¹² X-rays will be discussed in further depth in Chapter Four of this thesis.

at the Lyric the previous month.¹³ The substantial price of admission indicates that the venue was seeking a refined clientele. For the evening performances the Vivaceographe was shown as part of a varied programme, including the dioramic tours as well as lectures, illustrative songs and ballads. On the Tuesday afternoon, two ‘Special Exhibits’ of the animated pictures were scheduled at reduced prices,¹⁴ giving locals the opportunity to see an exclusive programme of animated pictures, without a variety element, which was similar to the display at The Horniman Hall in Croydon in early October.¹⁵ This indicates that there was intrinsic value in showing solely animated pictures, and that they did not necessarily need to rely upon other variety acts to form a viable entertainment. Despite this, it was the ‘dioramic tours’ that were emphasised in press advertisements in the two weeks leading up to the exhibition as the text for the dioramic tours was demonstrably larger and bolder than the text relating to the animated pictures part of the show.¹⁶ Banks was well-known for his dioramic tours, which took audiences on a virtual journey by means of lantern slides and dioramic and dissolving view techniques, suggesting that the show was sold as much on the known and familiar as it was on the novelty of animated pictures.

It appears from the local newspaper review that although the amusement value of the animated pictures was recognised, the quality of the pictures and apparatus was an issue:

Mr. Horace Banks’ dioramic shows and animated pictures attracted fairly good houses on the early days of the week, the biggest business being done on Wednesday, when the Ladies’ Hungarian Orchestra enlivened the entertainments with excellent music. The ‘Vivaceograph,’ which was quite the feature of the shows, suggests wonderful possibilities of amusement. At present it is little more than an interesting experiment. The pictures are blurred, and one’s eyes are pained by the jerky motion of the pictures as they follow one another on the screen.¹⁷

In the context of other entertainments in Ealing, this rather lacklustre review is little more than a passing reference. An astronomy lecture and a temperance concert, for example, received greater newspaper coverage that week than the first showing of animated pictures

¹³ *MCT*, 26 September 1896, p. 4.

¹⁴ *MCT*, 7 November 1896, p. 4 and p. 6.

¹⁵ See Chapter One of this thesis, pp. 26-27.

¹⁶ *MCT*, 31 October 1896, p. 4; *MCT*, 7 November 1896, p. 4.

in Ealing.¹⁸ Nor, unfortunately, is there any reference to the films shown.¹⁹ The animated pictures were considered as simply ‘an interesting experiment’ by the reviewer which hardly lives up to the claim of ‘the sensation of the age’ which had been promoted in advertisements, suggesting that the press were not persuaded by the literal sensationalism of the advertisements and were drawing conclusions based on their own viewing experiences. There was clearly some frustration that the high expectations of the viewing experience had not been met, which was perhaps exacerbated by the earlier comparisons to animated pictures at the Empire. The reviewer uses the present tense, for example when explaining that the pictures ‘are blurred’ and eyes ‘are pained’, suggesting that the reviewer was also making a generalisation about animated pictures rather than referring specifically to the Vivaceographe. Nevertheless, he could at least see the future possibilities of the medium and was not discounting it altogether.

The Victoria Hall

The Victoria Hall was the next venue to exhibit animated pictures after a gap of four months. This municipal hall was originally opened as a memorial for the 1887 Jubilee and could seat around one-thousand people.²⁰



Fig. 2.2 Victoria Hall, Ealing Town Hall, circa 1900s.
Courtesy of Ealing Local Studies Library, item T253.14.

¹⁷ *MCT*, 14 November 1896, p. 6.

¹⁸ There were twenty-eight lines of commentary regarding Robert Ball, the astronomer, who gave a lecture at the Victoria Hall. There were fifty-three lines of commentary regarding a temperance concert at The Victoria Hall. There were only twelve lines of commentary regarding animated pictures.

¹⁹ See Appendix 7 for an indication of the types of films Banks and Greaves were showing in this period.

²⁰ *MCT*, 6 February 1897, p. 6.

A photograph of the Hall (**Fig. 2.2**) provides a sense of the scale of the space in which the animated pictures were experienced, complete with some uncomfortable looking chairs and an imposing organ. On Saturday 6 March 1897, more than a year after the first public exhibitions in London, the so-called 'latest novelty' was shown for one day only at the Victoria hall, with a matinee and an evening performance.²¹ There is a sense of urgency created by the emphatic 'TO-DAY! TO-DAY!' positioned at the top of the newspaper advertisement.

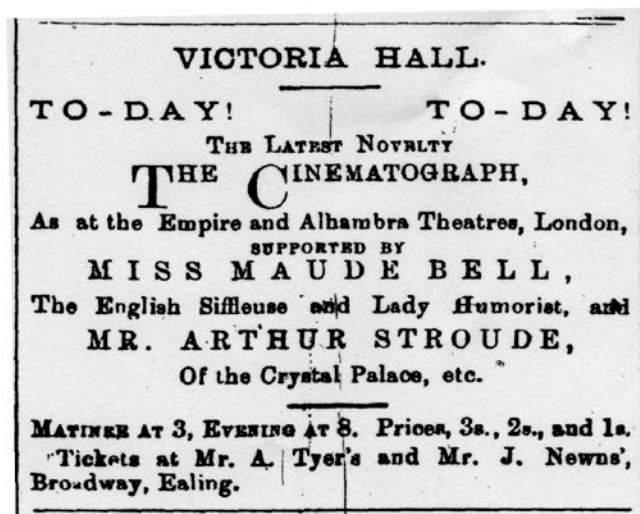


Fig. 2.3 Advertisement for the Victoria Hall, *MCT*, 6 March 1897, p. 4.

Described simply as the 'Cinematograph' the advertisement and subsequent review in *The Middlesex County Times* sadly did not provide any information regarding the exhibitor or the films shown, which suggests that the promise of animated pictures was enticement enough for the public. The animated pictures headlined the advertisement and would be supported by two variety acts. Admittance prices ranged from one to three shillings, which was in line with the cost of seats at the refined Lyric. This expense seems unusually high for a municipal hall, especially given that there is no suggestion that the cinematograph or exhibitor were well-known, while the two variety performers, Maude Bell and Arthur Stroude, were not particularly renowned either. It appears, however, that the annual profits of the hall were shared amongst various philanthropic organisations on an annual basis, which may explain the relatively admission high prices.²² The unknown cinematograph received a rather lukewarm review:

²¹ *MCT*, 6 March 1897, p. 4.

²² *MCT*, 18 December 1897, p. 5.

There were fair attendances at the Victoria Hall last Saturday when cinematographic entertainments of more than ordinary merit were given, similar in character to those recently given at the Empire and Alhambra Theatres. The entertainments were varied by performances by Miss Maude Bell [...] and Mr. Arthur Strode.²³

Once again we see a comparison to the central London shows at the Empire and Alhambra, which works on several levels. On the one hand it indicates that such entertainments were in reach of some of the inhabitants of Ealing, or there was at least an awareness of the latest London sensation through the press or by word of mouth. There is also the suggestion that Ealing could compare favourably with the West End as it was in a position to secure similar entertainments. The cross-reference to London cinematograph entertainments also served as a signifier which could manage public expectations in terms of the type of entertainment they could expect to see.

Venues such as the Lyric and Victoria Hall worked hard to secure local patronage and could not afford to rest on their laurels due to the competition from London entertainments, or indeed from other local towns such as Acton and Wimbledon. They employed a three-pronged approach by securing good quality entertainments at lower admittance prices than the central London theatres, whilst at the same time making comparisons to the Alhambra and Empire in advertisements and in the types of entertainment they offered. It was certainly recognised in the local press that the manager of the Lyric, Mr. Phillips, was making a concerted effort to implement this approach:

we congratulate Mr. Phillips on the general excellence of the companies he has arranged to appear at the Lyric. [...] A spirited management of this kind we have always contended will bring its own reward [...] Of course Ealing is still growing, and adds precisely that class of the population which fills the theatres. It must also be remember, however, that the London theatres are making stronger and stronger bids for suburban support, and in many cases are getting it. But with the present enterprising management in connection with about half the prices charged in London there need be no fear of the competition.²⁴

²³ *MCT*, 13 March 1897, p. 6.

²⁴ *MCT*, 13 February 1897, p. 6.

During a speech given by Mr. Phillips at his annual benefit in 1897, he also spoke of his pride in ‘the popularity which he seemed to have gained among the Ealing public’ and how ‘it had been his constant endeavour to bring Ealing as closely in touch with London as was possible’.²⁵ Described as ‘not a great man physically, but then he is almost Napoleonic in his acquaintance with managerial tactic’²⁶ Phillips was evidently an innovative manager, not only bringing in touring companies, often direct from London, but also allowing use of the Hall for local dramatic societies to showcase their productions.

Watson and McCleery

Animated pictures were shown privately later that month at a photographic studio run by Messrs. Lock and Whitfield, in Burlington House, Ealing Common.²⁷ The exhibition, which ran from Monday 22 until Wednesday 24 March, also included limelight views and some ventriloquism, and was reviewed in detail by *The Middlesex County Times*:

A private exhibition of limelight views and a display of animated photographs was given at Messrs. Lock and Whitfield’s Burlington Studio, Ealing Common, on the evenings of Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Most of the limelight views illustrated some of the most charming scenes of India, though a few portrayed the horrors of the present famine. The cinematographic display was remarkably interesting, the rapid succession of photographs presenting scenes from life in the most realistic fashion. The entertainment, which also included an amusing ventriloquial sketch by Mr. A. Watson, was under the personal supervision of Messrs Edward E. Watson and J. McCleery, who are prepared to repeat it ‘at homes,’ concerts, parties, dances, bazaars, and similar functions. During the entertainments collections were made on behalf of the Indian Famine Fund.²⁸

It certainly sounded like a civilised exhibition running over the course of several evenings, and an elegant cabinet card issued by Lock and Whitfield shows that this well-known studio aimed to cater to a refined clientele (**Fig. 2.4**). It is possible that the apparatus was a lantern with a combined cinematograph-projector, such as the more common Theatrograph or Wrench machine. There is no reference to the films that were shown, but the familiar

²⁵ *MCT*, 15 May 1897, p. 7.

²⁶ *MCT*, 6 June 1896, p. 6.

²⁷ *Kelly’s Ealing, Acton, Hanwell, Brentford, Gunnersbury & Chiswick Directory for 1896-1897* (London: Kelly & Co, 1897), p. 349.

themes of speed, movement, realism and life are evident in the review. The exhibitors Watson and McCleery evidently intended to exhibit animated pictures commercially at homes and at smaller functions rather than larger public halls or variety halls. Edward Ellis Watson was a local photographer²⁹ but McCleery's background is not certain.³⁰

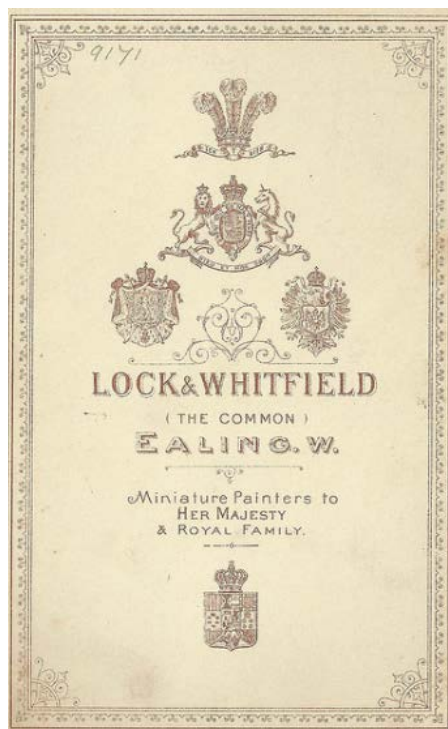


Fig. 2.4 Reverse of Lock and Whitfield cabinet card, 1909.

Courtesy of James Morley, 'Early Ealing Photographers', *Flickr*, 2015

<<https://www.flickr.com/groups/early-ealing-photographers/pool/>> [accessed 25 September 2015]

The Diamond Jubilee

Several months later in June, animated pictures were exhibited in Ealing as part of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations. A report in *The Middlesex County Times* shows how the Jubilee produced a unifying effect on the social classes comprising Ealing:

The crowds that thronged the principal thoroughfares at night were composed of all classes – the retired officer jostled it with the laundry girl; for once the London tradesman with a private residence in this most pleasant of suburbs fraternized with the Ealing tradesman who lives over his shop.³¹

²⁸ *MCT*, 27 March 1897, p. 6.

²⁹ For biographical information concerning Edward Ellis Watson, see: 'Photolondon: Person Details For 19th Century Photographers Database', *Photolondon.org.uk*, 2015
<<http://www.photolondon.org.uk/pages/details.asp?pid=8218>> [accessed 25 September 2015].

³⁰ McCleery may have been involved in a technical capacity as there was a J. McCleery living in Ealing who applied for a patent for bicycle-related apparatus in 1898. See *MCT*, 26 March 1898, p. 6.

³¹ *MCT*, 26 June 1897, p. 6.

Jubilee Day was an important event for Ealing, as it was for many other communities around the country. It was an opportunity to revel in civic pride despite any class or social distinctions. The celebrations in Ealing included a children's historical pageant, a torchlight procession and a beacon fire. More pertinently, in honour of Her Majesty's Reign, a Diamond Jubilee Bazaar and Fancy Fair was held at the Lyric from Tuesday 6 July to Saturday 10 July 1897, and for an admission price of one shilling the public could see a band, conjuring, musical sketches and animated photographs.³² Unfortunately the review of the Bazaar fails to mention the animated photographs but it was noted that the entertainments were arranged by a Mr. Percy Brough.³³ It is likely that this was the son of the well-known actor and comedian Lionel Brough. Percy was part of the Brough Comedy Company which toured mainly around Australia and New Zealand in the 1880s and 1890s. The British magician, Charles Bertram, fondly recalled travelling with Percy en route from Hong Kong to Australia, and lamented his death in his memoirs: 'Since commencing this account of my travels I regret, with the most profound sorrow to say that poor Percy Brough has passed away. Poor Perks, as we were so fond of him, 'a fellow of infinite jest.' We never knew a dull moment when Perks was around'.³⁴

The King of Ventriloquists

After a gap of three months, Lieutenant Walter Cole (**Fig. 2.5**), the self-proclaimed 'King of Ventriloquists' came to the Victoria Hall with his variety entertainment which was to include a 'strong show' of animated pictures on the evenings of Friday 15 and Saturday 16 October 1897, along with a matinee performance on the Saturday.³⁵ Cole was a near and distant voice 'vent', and although it was not reported, it is possible that he used his projection powers to give a voice to any people who featured in the silent films he exhibited. There is a kind of symmetry between animated pictures and ventriloquism: silent, life-size automatons were unable to talk without external input (the ventriloquist speaking on their behalf) whilst the silent film subjects could be given a voice through input from guides and lecturers such as Cole.

³² *MCT*, 19 June 1897, p. 4.

³³ *MCT*, 10 July 1897, p. 6.

³⁴ Charles Bertram, *A Magician in Many Lands* (London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd, 1911), p. 212.

³⁵ *MCT*, 9 October 1897, p. 6.



Fig. 2.5 Walter Cole, October 1877.
Courtesy of the British Library Evanion Collection, item 2646.

An advertisement in the Ealing press (**Fig. 2.6**) shows that Cole performed a two-hour show with admittance prices slightly lower than previously seen at the Hall, ranging from one shilling up to two shillings and sixpence.

VICTORIA HALL, EALING.
FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15th & 16th,
MATINEE, SATURDAY, 3.
Lieut. WALTER COLE.

NEW Company, New Ventriloquial Recitals, and the Latest Improved ANIMATED PHOTOS., including the QUEEN'S JUBILEE PROCESSION.

Lieut. COLE will be assisted by Miss Eva Bayley, Mr. Charles Wood, White Pierrot and Black Coon, Kato-Kato (Jongleur Parisian), and Mr. Oldbury Brough.

Lieut. WALTER COLE will introduce New Figures, New Songs, New and Scramingly Funny Sayings, New Electric Effects, and his NEW WALKING AUTOMATA. Rehearsing under Difficulties. Humorous Operettas, &c.

Doors open at 7.30; commence at 8; carriages at 10. Numbered and Reserved Chairs, 2s. 6d.; Un-numbered Reserved, 1s. 6d.; Body of Hall, 1s.; Early doors open at 7, admission 3d. extra; Ticket-holders Free.

Tickets and Plans at Tyer's, Broadway.
ACTON, MONDAY, OCT. 11th.

Fig. 2.6 Advertisement for the Victoria Hall, *MCT*, 9 October 1897, p. 4.

The entertainment was pitched as novel and modern through the use of concepts such as ‘latest’, ‘improved’ and ‘new’. This was also the first time that a specific film (*Queen’s Jubilee Procession*) had been referred to in an advertisement in *The Middlesex County Times*, demonstrating that a visual record of the Jubilee several months after the event itself could still be a novel draw for audiences. Having had expectations of a ‘strong show of animated photographs’,³⁶ *The Middlesex County Times* reviewed the entertainment:

Lieut. Walter Cole is well known and popular as a public entertainer, and his reputation attracted a considerable audience to the Victoria Hall last night, despite the counter-attraction of the ‘Geisha’ at the Lyric. The entertainment was of a varied character. A series of animated photographs was shown, including some interesting views of the Jubilee procession.³⁷

Once again the Jubilee procession is referred to, but the views are only deemed ‘interesting’. There is no perceptible sense of excitement at watching animated pictures, and no commentary offered concerning the apparatus or quality of the films. This was rather a subdued and lacklustre review of what would be the final cinematograph exhibition in Ealing in 1897.

Conclusion

The information regarding the first film shows in Ealing largely stems from an analysis of the main local newspaper in this period, *The Middlesex County Times*, which catered for suburban middle-class sensibilities, particularly in terms of the entertainments that it advertised and commented upon. The reviews must be treated with caution as they are ultimately the views of one person who was frequently content to offer a brief, somewhat indifferent opinion on the overall experience of viewing films. We should therefore be careful not to tarnish all Ealing audiences with one person’s generalisations. Far from being heralded as the sensation of the age, the cinematograph was described somewhat blandly as an ‘interesting experiment’, while the ‘jerky motion of the pictures’ was criticised.

³⁶ *MCT*, 9 October 1897, p. 6.

³⁷ *MCT*, 16 October 1897, p. 6.

References to specific films are sorely lacking in the Ealing press and it appears that only a film of the Jubilee procession warranted a special mention in the press, and that was not until October 1897.³⁸ Although the films themselves did not appear to be important, the concepts of life, movement and speed which were afforded by the cinematograph were frequently alluded to in previews, reviews and advertisements, in phrases such as ‘thrown on screen’, ‘rapid succession’, ‘scenes from life’, and ‘life-like motions’. Indeed, the word ‘Vivaceographe’ is the epitome of these motifs. Although the reviews do not reveal explicitly the films that were shown or how audiences responded to them, we are sometimes given an insight into the popularity of the cinematograph when it is reported that a venue experienced a full or crowded house, which at least suggests that local people had some enthusiasm or curiosity for seeing the ‘latest rage’.

More information can be gleaned from the pre-show advertisements, which often established who the exhibitors were, for how long they were engaged, and whether the cinematograph was shown alongside other entertainments. One way in which to determine which films were shown in Ealing is to conduct a wider survey of exhibitor engagements, in order to uncover further information about their film programmes in this period. We will see how fruitful such a survey can be by conducting a broader case study of Banks and Greaves, whose exhibition practices are explored in greater depth in Chapter Six.

Perhaps the overwhelming conclusion one must draw from the evidence available is that the exhibition of the cinematograph in Ealing in this period was infrequent.³⁹ The Vivaceographe was the only apparatus to be exhibited in 1896 over the course of three nights. There are then short bursts of activity taking place every three or four months, and apart from the Jubilee Bazaar, films did not coincide with festive periods or significant times of the year. The unnamed exhibitor at the Victoria Hall in March 1897 appears to have been engaged for one night only. Watson and McCleery’s private exhibition was effectively a dress-rehearsal and an opportunity to advertise their entertainment for future engagements. It was the Jubilee Bazaar which offered the longest running exhibition of animated pictures in Ealing, taking place over a week-long period. The final exhibition in 1897, brought to the town by Walter Cole, was for just a two-night stay.

A range of exhibitors showed animated pictures in Ealing during 1896 and 1897, including a lantern lecturer, a ventriloquist, a local photographer and two unnamed exhibitors, probably travelling showmen operating on a small scale. Animated pictures had the flexibility to be incorporated into existing exhibition formats which included lantern

³⁸ Appendix 3 (ii) indicates the severe lack of references to particular films shown in Ealing.

³⁹ Appendix 3 (i) provides a clear visual summary of the low number of cinematograph exhibitions.

slides, limelight views and ventriloquism. The exhibitors would have been attracted to the cinematograph for a variety of reasons but they shared the confidence to invest in a potentially risky new photographic medium in an attempt to capitalise on the cinematograph at an early stage. Considering they already had successful shows with a reliable audience base, this demonstrates an entrepreneurial spirit, an interest in the new form of cinematography, and a desire to be cutting-edge and one step ahead of, or at least in line with, their competitors. Banks clearly saw the value of animated pictures and was confident enough to offer a couple of cinematograph shows in Ealing on a standalone basis, suggesting that there was an appetite on the part of Ealing audiences for this format.

John Barnes has stated that ‘the home of the cinema during 1896 was the music hall’.⁴⁰ In Ealing (as well as in Croydon), we have seen that this statement warrants clarification. The Lyric hosted a cinematograph on only two occasions – during Banks and Greaves’ residency in November 1896 and as part of the Jubilee Bazaar in June 1897. Other venues included the municipal Victoria Hall, and a photographer’s studio. Animated pictures therefore offered flexibility in terms of the environment in which they could be shown and consequently had the ability to cater to different tastes and social classes depending on the venue.

In an attempt to counteract competition from central London entertainments, the cinematograph was positioned to Ealing audiences as the latest novelty, a modern and sensational invention that should be viewed locally in person by supporting venues such as the Lyric or the Victoria Hall, rather than travelling to the Alhambra, Empire or Olympia. By drawing such comparisons, Ealing venues and impresarios demonstrated that they could deliver comparable entertainments. This reveals much about Ealing as a place in this period by exposing some underlying suburban-urban tensions, and how the cinematograph had the scope to bridge the divide between suburban and urban spaces.

My analysis of the arrival of animated pictures in Ealing in 1896 and 1897 leaves one with the sense that the cinematograph made a rather uncertain and hesitant start in this particular suburb, carving out only a modest foothold among the available entertainments. The slow acquisition of the cinematograph in Ealing in this period is thus the very antithesis of the films themselves, with their focus on speed, motion and movement, such that the local trajectory of the so-called ‘sensation of the age’ was ambiguous to say the least.

⁴⁰ Barnes, *vol. 1*, p. 100.

CHAPTER THREE

FROM WONDER TO WEARINESS IN WOOLWICH

Animated pictures filtered down to the garrison town of Woolwich in November 1896, according to a similar timeframe in Ealing, nine months after the first public exhibitions in central London. The rather grandly-named ‘Barnard’s Theatre Royal’ was the first venue in Woolwich to exhibit animated pictures. Given that the same exhibitor was booked by Barnard’s for a further two occasions before the end of the year, this appears to have been an auspicious start for the cinematograph in Woolwich. With several more exhibitions taking place in quick succession in February 1897 in a variety of venues, the cinematograph looked set to have secured a regular place in the Woolwich entertainment calendar. Nevertheless, we will see that, rather than continuing to thrive in 1897, the frequency of film exhibition remained static, the general enthusiasm towards the apparatus and films was relatively muted, and emphasis was often placed on the limitations of the available technology.

Phil and Bernard’s Oscinematoscope

Phil and Bernard’s Oscinematoscope was exhibited at Barnard’s Theatre Royal on Beresford Street from Monday 9 November for one week. This was evidently the first film show in Woolwich, and was allegedly also Phil and Bernard’s first public appearance with a cinematograph.¹ The *Woolwich Gazette* announced that:

at great expense, Mr. Barnard has secured Phil and Bernard’s ‘Oscinemetograph’ with all the latest improvements, including Parisian views, children at play, and the railway station, concluding with animated views of the Coronation of the Czar of Russia, this picture having been taken at the express command of his Imperial Majesty.²

Here we see one of the many variants of the name of Phil and Bernard’s apparatus that was used in press advertisements and reviews. The Theatre Royal did not publish admittance prices in their press advertisements, preferring to state ‘Prices, &c., as usual’ which suggests that this music hall catered to a regular crowd. Fortunately a newspaper review gives us a flavour of the seating and prices available:

¹ *Era*, 5 December 1896, p. 31.

² *Woolwich Gazette and Kentish Advertiser*, 6 November 1896, p. 5.

The entertainment provided is always of that quality which we expect to find at a first class music-hall, and there are few provincial music halls on a par with Barnard's. Seats there are to suit all classes, with only the one fault [...] of being too cheap. Admission to the grand circle is only one shilling, and the seclusion of the private boxes can be purchased for eighteenpence. There is also a capital second circle to which sixpence will admit, and the charge for the pit is the ridiculous sum of threepence.³

An advertisement shows that the Oscinematoscope was headlining this typical music hall fare, which featured dancing, singing, comedy and even burlesque (Fig 3.1). Perhaps to inject a measure of gravitas in the programme, the scientific element of the Oscinematoscope was also emphasised.

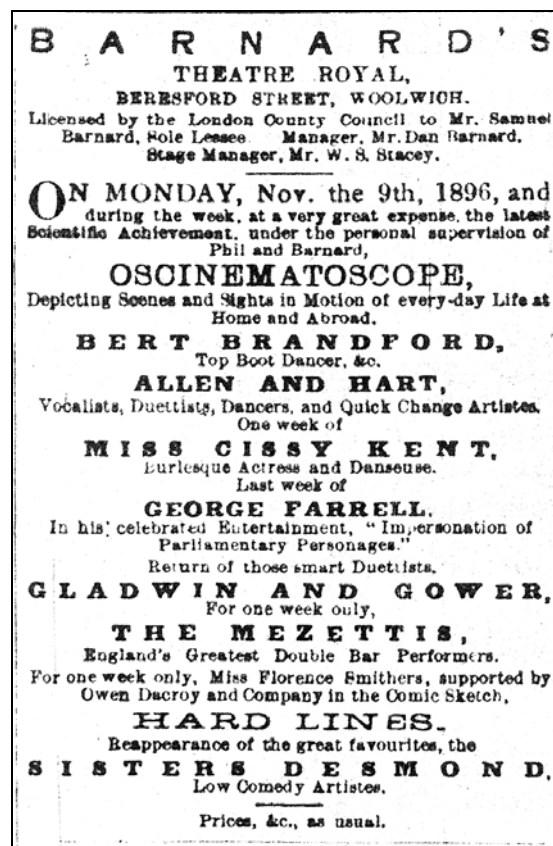


Fig. 3.1 Advertisement for Barnard's Theatre Royal, *KICA*, 7 November 1896, p. 1.

There had been a succession of theatrical establishments on the site of this theatre since the mid-1830s. When Samuel Barnard took over the management in 1892 it then became known as Barnard's Theatre Royal. Two performances were offered nightly and

³ *KICA*, 26 December 1896, p. 4.

despite its theatrical name, it provided more of a music hall entertainment with a mixture of comedy, drama, screaming farces, sketches and the like. *The Kentish Independent* reflected on the popularity of Barnard's and considered it 'almost a puzzle to find out where the people come from to fill twice every evening the Theatre Royal'. Their conclusion was that 'the railway time-table on the programme gives a clue to the fact that some hundreds of them come from Erith and contiguous places on the North Kent Line'.⁴

Phil and Bernard's Film Programme

Phil and Bernard's film programme in Woolwich was publicised as 'Scenes and Sights in Motion of every-day Life at Home and Abroad'.⁵ This included the film *Coronation of the Czar*, which *The Kentish Independent* suggested was 'taken at the express command of his Imperial Majesty'.⁶ This is likely to be bluster, as film historian Luke McKernan explains that 'Special permission had to be sought by the French embassy from a suspicious Russian government' in order to film the Coronation.⁷ The Coronation took place on 14 May 1896 and was filmed by Lumière operators, but as Lumière apparatus was not available on the open market until spring 1897 it is unlikely that Phil and Bernard were showing one of their films. There was, however, a film of the Coronation capable of being shown on a Theatrograph.⁸ Barnes believes this was not made by Robert Paul for his Theatrograph but was 'probably obtained from another source',⁹ although he does not surmise what that source may be. The other films shown, such as *Children at Play*, *Parisian Views* and *The Railway Station* could have been produced by Paul, Lumière or indeed one of many other early filmmakers and therefore cannot easily be attributed. The difficulty in unravelling the provenance of the films also hampers the identification of the machine, although by examining some of Phil and Bernard's subsequent engagements we will gain an insight into the apparatus they were using.

An advertisement in the *Woolwich Gazette* for Barnard's Theatre Royal described the Oscinamatoscope as 'the Great Sensational Drama'.¹⁰ *The Era* reviewed the entertainment but they, too, appear to have been misinformed: 'This week the popular

⁴ *KICA*, 23 October 1897, p. 4.

⁵ *KICA*, 7 November 1896, p. 1.

⁶ *KICA*, 7 November 1896, p. 4.

⁷ Stephen Herbert and Luke McKernan, *Who's Who of Victorian Cinema* (London: BFI, 1996), p. 43.

Information concerning Francis Doublier, a Lumière operator who filmed the coronation, can also be found online: 'Who's Who Of Victorian Cinema', *Victorian-cinema.net*, 2015 <<http://www.victorian-cinema.net/doublier>> [accessed 29 September 2015].

⁸ Barnes, *vol. 1*, pp. 143-144.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.143.

¹⁰ *WGKA*, 6 November 1896, p. 4.

attraction has been the presentation of a sensational drama entitled Oscinematoscope, which has taken well with the public who frequent this popular house'.¹¹ *The Kentish Independent* suggested that the Oscinematoscope was a good-quality machine: 'A capital show is in full swing this week, including the famous Oscinematoscope, which for steadiness and clearness eclipses all that has yet been produced'.¹² Nevertheless this review must be read with caution as it seems to publicise the apparatus rather than critically review it. The language is rather theatrical in nature and given that this was Phil and Bernard's first film exhibition, and the first film show in Woolwich, surely to describe it as 'famous' is an exaggeration. The reviewer most likely obtained the statement from the music hall or from publicity material, which explains the spin-like observation. It is certainly the case that Phil and Bernard were at pains to stress the picture quality of their apparatus, claiming in another advertisement, 'We have completely overcome the great impediments, i.e., Flicker and Vibration. Pictures perfectly steady',¹³ so this was evidently an aspect of their performance that they wished to highlight.

The Royal Arsenal to the rescue?

It is clear from reading the local press that Woolwich possessed a great sense of pride regarding the Royal Arsenal, and *The Kentish Independent* even went so far as to suggest that the Arsenal could become involved in the animated picture business:

Those 'living photographs' which, under various names, are coming very much to the front, are really surprising marvels of science, even in this Victorian age of vast invention, but they have been worked at now for a year or so, and they do not seem to improve as they ought to have done. The scientific principle leaves nothing to find fault with. It is the mechanic that is wanted. The photographer ought, and will, no doubt, make his pictures larger and some of them clearer, and sufficient care in the art of touching up would cure the patches and flashes which dazzle the eye and bewilder the brain, but the special need is better apparatus to steady both the camera and the lantern display. There are plenty of men in the Royal Arsenal who could devise a solid rest and a motor by which the reel of pictures could be in the first place secured and in the next place exhibited free entirely from the painful wobbling which mars so

¹¹ *Era*, 14 November 1896, p. 25.

¹² *KICA*, 14 November 1896, p. 4.

¹³ *Era*, 5 December 1896, p. 31.

seriously the pleasure we have in witnessing and studying this latest development of modern genius.¹⁴

This is a revealing article for several reasons. First, it mentions that living photographs ‘have been worked at now for a year or so’. As cinematography had not effectively become a commercial enterprise in England until the exhibition of the Theatrograph and Cinématographe in February 1896, this suggests that either the author considered animated pictures comparable with other methods of displaying moving images, such as kinetoscope devices, or he was making a reference to the initial Parisian exhibitions in Paris eleven months earlier. Second, the steadiness of the apparatus was still clearly an issue by November 1896 when this article was published, and there was disillusionment and annoyance that technical problems had not yet been resolved. The ‘painful wobbling’ seems to have been a considerable issue, impacting the experience of viewing animated pictures. It is unclear whether film exhibitions in Woolwich prompted this critique or if the journalist was venting his frustration more generally. In either case, this provides some useful context regarding Phil and Bernard’s claims concerning the Oscinematoscope’s steadiness and absence of flicker.

The apparatus

Phil and Bernard’s apparatus was exhibited under various guises, including the ‘Oscinematoscope’, the ‘Oscinematographe’ and the ‘O.S Cinematographe’. The press employed some further creative and phonetic spellings, such as the ‘Osilamatographe’ and the ‘Oscinemetograph’. In this period Phil and Bernard were represented by an agent called Arthur Day¹⁵ and this was clearly a more business-minded arrangement compared with the exhibitors in Croydon and Ealing who were contactable directly to arrange bookings. The advertisement below (**Fig. 3.2**) shows that by April 1897 Phil and Bernard were offering demonstrations of their machine in a private hall in Maida Vale, as they were attempting to offload five cinematographs, complete with all the necessary equipment and films.

¹⁴ *KICA*, 28 November 1896, p. 4.

¹⁵ *Era*, 5 December 1896, p. 31.



Fig. 3.2 Advertisement for the O. S. Cinematographe, *The Era*, 10 April 1897, p. 29.

In July 1897 Phil and Bernard are known to have been exhibiting a Wrench cinematograph at the Alhambra in central London as part of a special Jubilee programme.¹⁶ Phil and Bernard may even have had access to a Wrench machine as early as November 1896 as one journal noted that month 'we learn that a number of these instruments are now in use in the provinces, and that the exhibitors are making good financial headway'.¹⁷ The Wrench cinematograph was reduced to the accessible rate of £36 from October 1896, making it an attractive choice when other machines such as the Theatrograph were still selling for £100. Nevertheless Barnes surmises that Phil and Bernard were using Ottway & Son's 'Animatoscope' during the initial stage of their career. Advertisements in *The Era* in early 1897 referred to Phil and Bernard's 'O.S. Cinematographe' (including Fig 3.2) and Barnes suggests 'the initials O.S may stand for the name of the manufacturer, perhaps Ottway & Son'.¹⁸ This is certainly an attractive proposition. Ottway's Animatoscope was produced from November 1896. As Phil and Bernard were consistently using the 'Os' and 'O.S' prefix from early that month, they may have obtained one of the first models available. The plot thickens further, however, as an advertisement in *The Era* from December 1897 implicitly connects Wrench apparatus with the Oscinematoscope.¹⁹

¹⁶ *The Times*, 26 July 1897, p. 8.; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 9 July 1897, p. 1.

¹⁷ *Optical Magic Lantern Journal*, 7.90 (November 1896), p. 178.

¹⁸ Barnes, vol. 2, p. 165.

¹⁹ *Era*, 25 December 1897, p. 25.



Fig. 3.3 Advertisement for Wrench's cinematograph, *The Era*, 25 December 1897, p. 25.

The advertisement (**Fig. 3.3**) lists eleven venues where the Wrench Cinematograph had been exhibited, including five theatres where Phil and Bernard are known to have shown the Oscinematoscope: Palace, Chatham; Royal, Woolwich; Queen's, Poplar; Palace Theatre of Varieties, Manchester and Foresters' Hall, London.²⁰ Perhaps this is simply a coincidence and both the Wrench cinematograph and Oscinematoscope were exhibited independently at those five theatres over the course of 1896 and 1897. My research concerning the Theatre Royal in Woolwich, however, indicates that only the Oscinematoscope and Theatrograph were shown at this venue in this period. This would suggest that the Oscinematoscope and Wrench cinematograph were one and the same.

Viewing the Oscinematoscope

Percy G. Court was a Woolwich stage carpenter who began his career in the late 1890s, later becoming a theatre and tour manager. From his memoirs we potentially have an insight into the experience of seeing the Oscinematoscope in action. Here, Percy remembers touring the country as a stage carpenter with the pantomime Red Riding Hood during the 1897-1898 winter season:

²⁰ See an advertisement for Phil and Bernard's engagements in *Era*, 5 December 1896, p. 31; See also a review for the Foresters' Hall in *Era*, 20 February 1897, p. 20.

After Croydon, again I visited the Royal Aldershot with a stay of a fortnight. Then to the Queens Theatre, Longton in the Potteries. Here, added to the pantomime, was the ‘Oscinematoscope’ demonstrated by Spencer Clarke, from the Empire Leicester Square. The apparatus was fixed to the book rest, centre of the circle: no protection, no cinema box, but just the open machine, which sounded like a gatling gun - as the spool was turned by hand: which afterwards dropped into a clothes basket. Primitive conditions indeed. The picture portrayed a railway station, the train coming into the station, with the travellers alighting from the train. If the picture was dim, a bucket of water and a syringe was used to drench the “Cloth” on which the pictures were shown - this had a salutary effect, and the picture was more defined, but we had to abandon this new entertainment - which London acclaimed as a modern wonder.²¹

Perhaps this Oscinematoscope was one of the models that Phil and Bernard disposed of in 1897. It is a colourful and vivid recollection of the machine in action, although it is worth remembering that the information gleaned from memoirs is only as reliable as the author’s memory. Percy was recording his memoirs in 1953, over fifty years after the event, and as Percy himself says ‘every word [...] is from past recollections – if – ‘a faux pas’ occurs – please forgive me as I have not resorted to a collection of historical accounts, this data is entirely from memory’.²² A skim through *The Era* shows that the company performing *Little Red Riding Hood* was actually on tour during the winter of 1898-1899 and performing at Longton for two weeks from 6 February 1899.²³ So Percy was a couple of years awry with his timings. This misrecollection also casts doubt on whether it was actually an Oscinematoscope projector he saw in Longton, and indeed if Spencer Clarke was at the helm.²⁴ With Percy travelling the length and breadth of the country in the theatre business for many years, it is understandable if he was confused regarding the apparatus or exhibitor. As Percy’s hometown was Woolwich, it would not be too much of a stretch to suggest that the term ‘Oscinematoscope’ was familiar to him following its appearance a few years earlier at Barnard’s Theatre Royal. Even so, his recollections suggest something

²¹ ‘Memories Of Show Business By Percy G Court - Chapter One’, *Arthurlloyd.co.uk*, 2015
 <<http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/MemoriesOfShowBusiness/MemoriesOfShowBusinessChapter1.htm>>
 [accessed 29 September 2015].

²² Ibid.

²³ *Era*, 4 February 1899, p. 5. See also an advertisement placed by Percy notifying his availability for work in *Era*, 11 February 1899, p. 28. Percy was seeking a new engagement and was contactable at the Queen’s Theatre, Longton.

²⁴ Spencer Clarke is known to have exhibited the Lumière Cinématographe in 1897 as part of an advertising campaign by Nestlé and Lever Brothers. See Chapter One of this thesis, p. 56.

of the primitive nature of a lot of early film shows, which puts into perspective Phil and Bernard's claims about the quality and steadiness of their machine.

The Polytechnic

Two weeks after the start of Phil and Bernard's engagement in Woolwich, local audiences had the opportunity to attend another exhibition when films were shown at the Woolwich Polytechnic on Saturday 21 November. The Polytechnic was founded in 1890 to provide evening classes and a social meeting space with the aim of educating and improving the adult members of the working classes. This was the second Polytechnic to be founded by the educator and philanthropist Quintin Hogg (the first being the Regent Street Polytechnic, where the Lumière Cinématographe was first demonstrated in London in February 1896). *The Kentish Independent* described the Woolwich film programme, although unfortunately the exhibitor and apparatus is not named:

Three times on Saturday there were exhibitions of animated photography at the Woolwich Polytechnic. The first, at 3p.m., was at some disadvantage owing to the lingering daylight, and there was not a large attendance, but at 4.30 the assembly numbered about 200, and in the evening at 8 the great hall was quite full. The best of the pictures was a scene at Ilfracombe, but some of the most remarkable were taken at Brighton on a Bank-holiday, and the most interesting was the long procession of the Czar and Czarina through Paris. It was like sitting at a window and seeing the cavalcade go past. Some clever feats of plate spinning, shadowgraphy, music and recitation, filled up the entertainment.²⁵

The cinematograph was clearly the main attraction, with other entertainments supplementing the package on offer. The way that audience numbers increased throughout the day suggests that word of mouth may have played an important role. Despite the detailed review, attempting to identify the exhibitor and films proves problematic as they are not easily attributable to one filmmaker. The programme may have included Birt Acres' films *Ilfracombe*, *Capstone Parade* and possibly his *Brighton on a Bank Holiday*. Acres was unlikely, however, to have been the exhibitor as he was not specifically mentioned and nor was his Kineopticon machine referred to. Before 1898, Acres' films were not sold on the open market but were shown by Acres himself or exhibitors he

²⁵ *KICA*, 28 November 1896, p. 4.

appointed,²⁶ but some films would have slipped through the net, so it is possible that an independent exhibitor acquired *Ilfracombe* through other means.

The procession of the Czar and Czarina took place during their visit to Paris in October 1896. Unsurprisingly several French filmmakers seized the chance to film the Czar's procession on their home ground. There is an extant film of *Tsar Nicholas II and Tsarina Alexandra in Paris*, possibly filmed by Gaumont, showing a procession of the monarchs accompanied by soldiers on horseback in Paris.²⁷ Méliès produced two films entitled *The Czar and his Cortège going to Versailles* and *The Czar's Cortège in the Bois de Boulogne*. Eugène Pirou, the self-titled '*photographe des rois*', is known to have produced films of the Czar's official engagements in Paris,²⁸ and Lumière cameramen produced several films of the procession and parades.²⁹ Another film entitled *Czar's Procession – Paris* was shown before Queen Victoria on 23 November 1896 at Windsor Castle. Although it was shown on a Theatrograph it is not believed to have been filmed by Paul.³⁰ Esmé Collings produced *Czar in Paris* as well as *Brighton Front on a Bank Holiday* (August 1896), so perhaps his films were shown at the Woolwich Polytechnic in addition to Acre's *Ilfracombe*. John Tester of the British Toy Novelty Company was an agent for Birt Acres' Kineopticon machine and films until the end of 1896 and he also acquired a number of films by Collings.³¹ As the Woolwich programme potentially had an Acres and Collings connection, the exhibitor may have acquired a mixed selection of films through Tester.

There is a wonderful anecdote in *The Photographic News*, describing the endeavours of an Englishman to film the Czar's procession, and showing the lengths that cameramen would go in order to secure the best vantage point for such a prestigious event:

I must say I like the story that comes from Paris as to the taking of the Czar's entrance into Paris for one or other of the animated photographs. Application was made to the police for permission to erect the camera at some post of advantage, but this was refused. "It might be an infernal machine," said the Prefect. Nothing daunted, the photographer secured a room in an advantageous position, and having made all necessary arrangements, placed in the window a

²⁶ Barnes, *vol. I*, p. 190.

²⁷ See the BFI Film and TV database for further details: 'Tsar Nicholas II and Tsarina Alexandra in Paris (1896)', *BFI*, 2015 <<http://ftvdb.bfi.org.uk/sift/title/69274>> [accessed 29 September 2015].

²⁸ Herbert and McKernan, *Who's Who of Victorian Cinema*, p. 111.

²⁹ Michelle Aubert and Jean-Claude Seguin, *La production cinématographique des frères Lumière* (Paris: Bibliothèque du film, 1996), pp. 158-159.

³⁰ Barnes, *vol. I*, p. 143.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

lady, whose ample proportions concealed the greater portion of the universe behind her. At the very moment that the Emperor came in sight she moved on one side, and there was exposed to view the machine. [...] It was an English photographer who had done the deed, the *conciergerie* said. [...] The photographer is showing his spoil at all sorts of variety theatres.³²

Anecdotes aside, the Russian royal visit to Paris was a significant occasion and gives us an insight into the excitement that the film of the Czar's procession might have generated for Woolwich audiences.

Back by popular demand

The Oscinematoscope was quickly brought back to Barnard's Theatre Royal for the week of the 23 November and an advertisement in *The Kentish Independent* exclaimed 'The proprietor begs to announce that he has, at the request of a large number of patrons made arrangements with Messrs. Phill and Barnard [*sic*] to reproduce their original OSCENEMATOGRAPHE'.³³ Phil and Bernard had spent the intervening time at Barnard's Palace of Varieties in Chatham,³⁴ where according to *The Era* the 'Oscilamatographe' was a 'big attraction'.³⁵ The advertisement below (**Fig. 3.4**) from the *Chatham & Rochester News* provides a flavour of the types of films that Phil and Bernard were showing in this period, which included *Street Scene in Paris*, *Blacksmith at Work*, *Railway Station*, *Coronation of the Czar*, *Swimming and Diving*, *Boulevard Scene – Hamstrung*, and comic pictures.

³² *Photographic News*, 40.46 (13 November 1896), p. 749.

³³ *KICA*, 21 November 1896, p. 1.

³⁴ Despite the name, there seems to be no connection between Barnard's in Chatham and Barnard's in Woolwich.

³⁵ *Era*, 21 November 1896, p. 23.

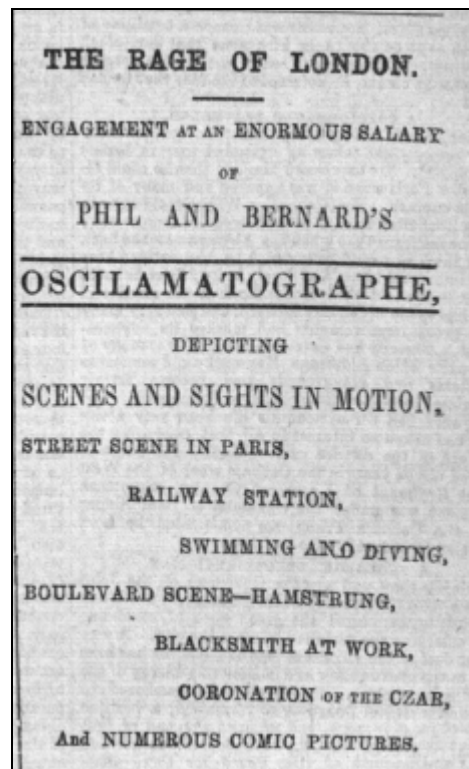


Fig. 3.4 Advertisement for the Palace of Varieties in Chatham, *Chatham & Rochester News*, 14 November 1896, p. 1.

Several of the films appeared to have a French connection by virtue of their titles, although they were popular scenes and could just as easily be ascribed to a filmmaker such as Robert Paul. This awareness of films shown by Phil and Bernard outside of Woolwich helps to create a picture of their film canon in this period, and as *Coronation of the Czar* and *Railway Station* were shown in Woolwich only two weeks earlier at Phil and Bernard's first engagement, it is likely that these additional Chatham films also formed part of their Woolwich programme around this time.³⁶

During their second Woolwich engagement, Phil and Bernard received positive reviews once more: 'An exceptionally good show is that put on this week, the famous Oscenematograph of Messrs. Phil and Bernard [*sic*] are coming in for a large share of attention'.³⁷ *The Era* also reported that the Oscenematographe 'proved very attractive'.³⁸ The *Woolwich Gazette* reported that the film repertoire now also included *Soldiers on the March*, *Lord Mayor's Show*, *Brighton Beach*, *Czar of Russia at Paris* and *Gouty Sportsman*.³⁹ Given that the Lord Mayor's Show took place on 9 November, Phil and Bernard were quick to obtain an animated picture of the pageant, perhaps a copy produced

³⁶ Appendix 5 (ii) lists all the films shown by Phil and Bernard in Chatham in November 1896, and these films were most probably also shown in Woolwich that month.

³⁷ *KICA*, 28 November 1896, p. 4.

³⁸ *Era*, 28 November 1896, p. 5.

³⁹ *WGKA*, 27 November 1896, p. 5.

by Collings or Paul who are known to have filmed the procession. *The Sheffield Independent* made a rather perceptive observation concerning the filming of the Lord Mayor's Show, but sadly the footage is not known to be extant:

The glories of the Lord Mayor's Show of 1896 will be handed down to posterity, if, without the glamour of colour, with all their pantomimic life and reality. Early in the morning of November 9, M. Trewey and a body of Kodak bearers were making for Charing Cross, while Mr. Paul, and other manipulators were seen at other points on the line of procession. The results will soon be visible at the various places of amusement.⁴⁰

Collings also filmed *Soldiers in Portsmouth* and *Military Scene* prior to January 1897,⁴¹ and there was also a film of a military parade that was capable of being shown on the Theatrograph.⁴² It is interesting that films of *Czar in Paris* and *Brighton Beach* had been seen in Woolwich only two days earlier at the Polytechnic, illustrating how certain films cropped up frequently in film exhibitions and how limited the film pool was in this early period. As for the peculiarly titled *Gouty Sportsman*, I have been unable to identify this film but it evokes an image of a stereotypically corpulent Victorian sportsman.

A festive film exhibition

Phil and Bernard were responsible for the final exhibition of films in Woolwich in 1896 and they were brought back to Barnard's Theatre Royal especially for the Christmas entertainment:

In the Christmas programme [...] there will also be a repetition of those living and moving photographs which bear the name at this theatre of 'the Oscinemetograph'.⁴³

Their engagement commenced on Monday 28 December for one week. An advertisement in *The Kentish Independent* this time referred to 'Phil and Burnard's [*sic*] OSCINEMATOGAPHE. With New Pictures and Effects'.⁴⁴ The newspaper failed to review the film performance in subsequent issues but the Christmas entertainment was

⁴⁰ *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 12 November 1896, p. 6.

⁴¹ Barnes, *vol. 1*, p. 241 and p.264.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁴³ *KICA*, 26 December 1896, p. 4.

⁴⁴ *KICA*, 26 December 1896, p. 1.

popular overall as the reviewer declared ‘Mr. S. Barnard [...] engaged for the holiday season some of the best talent obtainable and during the week overflowing houses have been the rule at each performance’.⁴⁵

For one night only

The Royal Artillery Theatre was the first venue in Woolwich to show films in 1897, when the ‘animatographe’ was exhibited as part of a variety entertainment for one night only on Saturday 6 February. The unknown exhibitor was due to show ‘fifteen living pictures, some quite novel’.⁴⁶ The Animatographe was the name given to Robert Paul’s Theatrograph, but on this occasion, and given the muted acknowledgement of the entertainment in *The Kentish Independent*, it was likely to be a cinematograph exhibited by an itinerant showman.

Dyson’s Dioramas and Gypsy Choir

The Royal Assembly Rooms played host to Dyson’s Dioramas and Gypsy Choir later the same month for a two-week period.⁴⁷ Joshua Dyson toured the country with his panoramic entertainment and an Edwardian postcard depicting the choir shows the scale of the company (**Fig. 3.5**). Such postcards formed part of Dyson’s publicity campaign and were sent to individuals in advance of his arrival to a town.



Fig. 3.5 Joshua Dyson postcard, circa Edwardian period, Amy Bethel collection

⁴⁵ *KICA*, 2 January 1897, p. 4.

⁴⁶ *KICA*, 6 February 1897, p. 4.

⁴⁷ Incidentally, the Public Hall in Croydon also played host to Joshua Dyson's Dioramas and Gipsy Choir from 30 March 1896 for two weeks (without animated pictures). For an advertisement see *CT*, 28 March 1896, p. 5.

The show opened in Woolwich on Sunday 7 February with a special sacred song service but the following day the visual and musical entertainments commenced and animated pictures were presented nightly for two weeks until 21 February. Admittance prices ranged from three pence to two shillings for the 8pm evening performances.⁴⁸ *The Kentish Independent* reviewed the entertainment but did not mention the animated pictures, but we can surmise from newspaper advertisements that they soon became the highlight of the evening performances. Before the entertainment, the sacred song service took pride of place in an advertisement, while animated photographs were relegated to the end of the programme. Yet once the evening shows were under way ‘Animated Photography’ had become the main focus.⁴⁹ The local newspaper was evidently fond of their ‘old friends Mr. Dyson and his Gypsy Party’⁵⁰ as they provided a glowing review. It is a rather vague description of the content of the programme, and it certainly sounds an intriguing entertainment:

Fourteen months have elaped [*sic*] since Mr. Dyson and his gipsy choir were last at Woolwich, and yet the whole population has flocked to meet and greet them with all the fervour of enduring friendship. At their first appearance [...] hundreds of people were unable to get in, and the same may be said of every performance during the week. There seems to be a fascination about Dyson’s entertainment which no other of the travelling shows can catch. It has had a novel experiment quite lately in a six weeks’ run at the London Polytechnic in Regent Street. For the first week the Londoners did not understand it, but little by little they caught on, and then went just as mad after it as every other place has done under the like temptation. As long stays are pleasant and profitable, Mr. Dyson means to try the cockneys again, and see if he can tire them in six months.⁵¹

By gently mocking the ‘Londoners’ and ‘cockneys’, the review also illustrates how the local press considered Woolwich audiences to be more *au fait* with this novel type of entertainment by comparison with central or west-end audiences. The newspaper even went so far as to claim that hundreds of admirers of Dyson’s Diorama had travelled down

⁴⁸ *Blackheath Gazette*, 5 February 1897, p. 4.

⁴⁹ *KICA*, 6 February 1897, p. 1; *KICA* 13 February 1897, p. 1.

⁵⁰ *KICA*, 6 February 1897, p. 4.

⁵¹ *KICA*, 13 February 1897, p. 4.

from London to see the entertainment in Woolwich.⁵² It was nearby Erith, however, that received the brunt of *The Kentish Independent's* snobbery with regards to Dyson's Diorama when it returned to the area a few months later:

Even at Erith, where they have put in a week for the first time, they have met with overwhelming favour and crowded audiences every night, such as might have been thought impossible in a place of such limited expansion.⁵³

The Prosser Roberts Cinematograph

Later in the same month the Woolwich Photographic Society held their third annual evening exhibition at the St. John's Schools rooms from Thursday 25 until Saturday 27 February. The public could pay one shilling to attend the opening night, or sixpence thereafter. It was emphasised in the advertisement that the exhibition would include the 'Prosser Roberts Cinematograph' at no extra charge.⁵⁴ I believe the exhibitor was David Prosser Roberts, the Croydon chemist who exhibited animated pictures at the Croydon Camera Club the previous week.⁵⁵ Ten films were exhibited in Croydon, including *Railway Station*, *Cycling* and *Skirt Dancer*,⁵⁶ so it is extremely likely that these films were shown in Woolwich and Prosser Roberts was once again at the helm. There is no indication in Woolwich or Croydon that the cinematograph was of Prosser Roberts's own design, and given the types of films shown it was most likely to have been a machine such as the Wrench projector.

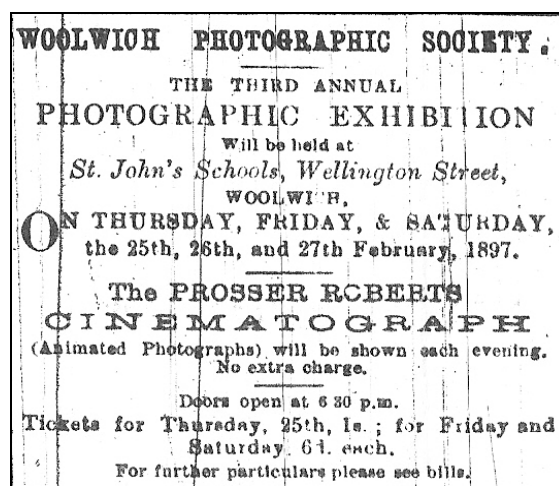


Fig. 3.6 Advertisement, Woolwich Photographic Society, *KICA*, 20 February 1897, p. 1.

⁵² *KICA*, 20 February 1897, p. 4.

⁵³ *KICA*, 22 May 1897, p. 4.

⁵⁴ *KICA*, 20 February 1897, p. 1.

⁵⁵ See Chapter One of this thesis, p. 47.

⁵⁶ By combining the data in Appendix 2 (v) and Appendix 5 (iv) we know of at least four films that Prosser Roberts was showing in this period.

The Kentish Independent describes the popularity of the exhibition, and the best of the films shown:

All the experts concur in pronouncing the third annual exhibition of the society the best of the series [...] On each of the evenings devoted to it the rooms [...] were crowded; there was at times no little difficulty in moving about, and to make a close inspection of the more attractive exhibits required considerable patience and persistence [...] intermittent displays of the cinematographe and lantern slides in an adjoining room brought occasional periods of depopulation [...] The animated pictures shewn on the screen were of the customary character, some better and some worse than average. The best examples were, perhaps, the Railway Station and the Church Parade. Between them were shewn a number of ordinary photographs by members of the society.⁵⁷

Coincidentally there was a film produced called *Church Parade in Woolwich*, which was linked to Chard & Co, but the first reference to it is not found until May 1897, too late for this particular exhibition.⁵⁸ Acres also produced *A Church Parade of Troops*, which was certainly available from January 1897,⁵⁹ along with *Cycling in Hyde Park*, which was produced no later than September 1896.⁶⁰

The appraisal of Prosser Roberts' cinematograph was somewhat lukewarm, especially when compared with the reviews in Croydon the previous week.⁶¹ I believe this rather indifferent feeling was indicative of an emerging weariness towards animated pictures in Woolwich, rather than it being a reflection on Prosser Roberts *per se*. As we saw, in November 1896 *The Kentish Independent* was already complaining how the quality and technology of the medium was not necessarily keeping pace with the hype of animated pictures.⁶²

Joshua Dyson returns

Dyson's dioramas and gipsy choir visited Woolwich for another week from 17 May at The Assembly Rooms, 'the sixth visit of these popular Entertainments in less than 3½ years'.⁶³ The Assembly Rooms had started life as a concert room above a tavern but was in the

⁵⁷ *KICA*, 6 March 1897, p. 5.

⁵⁸ Barnes, *vol. 2*, p. 223.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁶⁰ Barnes, *vol. 1*, p.240.

⁶¹ See Chapter One of this thesis, pp. 47-48.

⁶² *KICA*, 28 November 1896, p. 4.

⁶³ *KICA*, 15 May 1897, p. 1.

process of being transformed into a variety theatre from the early 1890s.⁶⁴ Films were shown at every performance during Dyson's engagement but were not given a special mention in the subsequent press reviews.

Paul's Theatrograph

Paul's Theatrograph was the next cinematograph to be exhibited in Woolwich, from 14 June. The language used in one advertisement implies that Paul would be present at each performance, yet while it might be thought a coup for Barnard's Theatre Royal to be exhibiting such a renowned machine with Paul present, the Theatrograph actually appeared at the bottom of the variety bill and there was no preview in the local press.⁶⁵ The Theatrograph must have proved popular, however, as it was advertised for a further week whilst the Jubilee celebrations were taking place: 'Great success and re-engagement owing to Jubilee Holidays of Mons. Paul's Theatrograph'.⁶⁶ The local press failed to review the Theatrograph performance, but given that it was Jubileetide, the local audiences may have been fortunate enough to see Paul's Jubilee procession films, which were recorded on Tuesday 22 June and shown at the Alhambra on Friday 25 June. We know that Paul did show the Jubilee films at music halls other than the Alhambra as this prompted a contractual disagreement with the management which eventually led to a court case.⁶⁷ Although the Theatrograph was retained as a feature during the Jubilee holidays, *The Kentish Independent* was more interested in the local celebrations and the London procession, which meant the Theatrograph was overlooked in all the excitement.

The Wonders of the World

There was a delay of five months before animated photographs were shown again in Woolwich. A lecture on 'The Wonders of the World' was given by Mr. F. A. Gane at the Woolwich Polytechnic on 20 November, including dioramic views and an exhibition of animated photographs in the evening.⁶⁸ Very little is known of Gane, but he evidently had a background of presenting dioramic views and instructive lectures, as an advertisement from 1892 shows (**Fig. 3.7**). *The Palace Journal* was a weekly chronicle of the People's Palace which was an educational and cultural centre for the east end community in London.

⁶⁴ 'Royal Assembly Rooms, Woolwich - The Theatres Trust', *Theatretrust.org.uk*, 2015 <<http://www.theatretrust.org.uk/resources/theatres/show/2324-royal-assembly-rooms-woolwich>> [accessed 29 September 2015].

⁶⁵ *KICA*, 12 June 1897, p. 1.

⁶⁶ *KICA*, 19 June 1897, p. 1.

⁶⁷ *Era*, 26 February 1898, p. 19.

⁶⁸ *KICA*, 27 November 1897, p. 4.

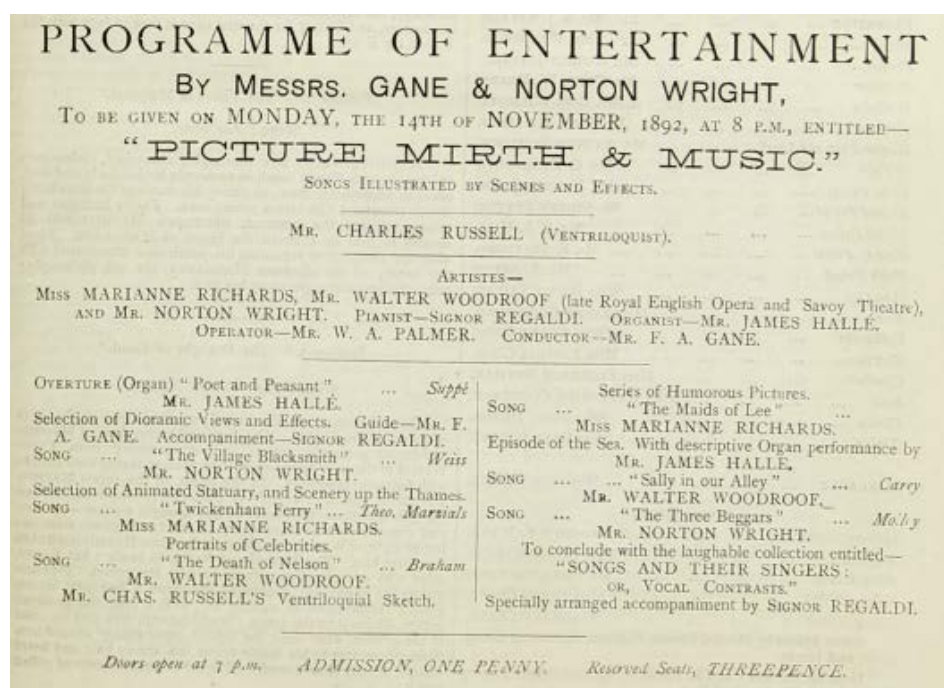


Fig. 3.7 Messrs. Gane & Norton Wright, *The Palace Journal*, 11 November 1892, p. 347.

Unfortunately no information was provided in the local press concerning the films that Gane exhibited, at what was to be the last film show in Woolwich in 1897.

Conclusion

The last two months of 1896 saw a flurry of cinematograph displays in Woolwich, and the arrival of animated photography seems to have been well-received by the public and thus provided a solid foundation upon which film exhibitors could build during the coming months. This boded well for this new form of entertainment, and there was a veritable influx of animated picture exhibitions in early 1897 with three discrete displays in February. Despite this, the momentum did not continue and the number of displays remained relatively static, with only three more displays over the remainder of the year,⁶⁹ which is surprising considering the increasing number of showmen and lanternists acquiring machines in this period.

The Oscinematoscope was evidently popular enough with the Woolwich public to persuade Samuel Barnard to showcase this entertainment on three different occasions in two months at his theatre, even bringing Phil and Bernard back after only a week’s absence on one occasion. The Oscinematoscope was clearly not a one-hit-wonder consigned to oblivion after its initial appearance in Woolwich, and the fact that Phil and Bernard went

⁶⁹ See the data in Appendix 4 which shows that the frequency of film exhibition did not increase considerably in Woolwich between 1896 and 1897.

on to exhibit a Wrench machine at the renowned Alhambra in 1897 suggests that they were accomplished entertainers and cinematograph operators. Nevertheless, very little is known about Phil and Bernard in spite of their engagement at the renowned London music hall.

Although Barnard's Theatre Royal was the first venue to show a cinematograph in Woolwich and eagerly booked Phil and Bernard for three engagements in quick succession in 1896, the venue only arranged for animated photographs to be shown on one occasion during 1897, which happened to coincide with Jubileetide. In fact we see a diverse range of venues exhibiting films in 1897, including the Polytechnic, Assembly Rooms, Artillery Theatre and St John's Schools rooms. Researching the types of venues where films were shown in Woolwich has revealed much about the town in this period, and a sense of pride in the garrison town frequently shines through the local press reports. There is an impression of a growing town trying to make a name for itself and to determine its place amongst neighbouring Kentish towns and the metropolis.

We know that Phil and Bernard, Robert Paul, Joshua Dyson and Prosser Roberts all exhibited films in Woolwich, yet there are several exhibitors who remain a mystery. Even when the exhibitor is known it has still proved difficult to identify and attribute their films, particularly as so many film subjects were copied in this early period and shared similar titles. Although Woolwich had a large working class population, it does not appear that the films exhibited were especially tailored to the audiences or particularly distinctive in that regard. There were a mixed selection of films from 'home and abroad' including actualities, topical, comedies, street scenes and people going about their everyday business. Apart from the festive programme in 1896, and Jubileetide in 1897, the film exhibitions do not appear to have coincided with any special events and were shown in their own right, as a main attraction alongside other entertainments.

In terms of reception, the local newspaper reviews were initially positive which was very much in keeping with the general interest surrounding cinematography. In Woolwich, however, we do not see sensational taglines being used in press advertisements to draw in the crowds. At Barnard's Theatre Royal it was the name of the apparatus that was emphasised in advertisements, rather than employing a pithy phrase such as the 'Rage of London' (as used in nearby Chatham). The first time that the Oscinematoscope was advertised in *The Kentish Independent*, there was a short description explaining that it was 'the latest Scientific Achievement [...] Depicting Scenes and Sights in Motion of everyday Life'.⁷⁰ In subsequent advertisements, however, there is no explanation as to the nature of the entertainment which suggests that a local public consciousness was developing

⁷⁰ *KICA*, 7 November 1896, p. 1.

about the Oscinematoscope, perhaps due to the music hall having a regular clientele who had seen this cinematograph the first time it was exhibited.

Cinematograph exhibitors visiting Woolwich in 1896 initially piqued the interest of local audiences, and the start of 1897 looked promising with several cinematograph shows within a short space of time. We then see a growing ambivalence in the local press towards the cinematograph in response to a lack of technical development or improvements in the steadiness of the apparatus. This is particularly evident in comparison to the initial excitement concerning the exhibition of the Oscinematoscope in 1896. The timing of the Queen's Jubilee in June 1897 was fortuitous as the spectacular event had the scope to revive the fortunes of the waning cinematograph. In spite of this potential momentum, there appears to have been only one other cinematograph exhibition in Woolwich during the remainder of the year, and as 1897 came to a close, the commercial future of the cinematograph was looking increasingly uncertain.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUBURBIA AND X-RAY CULTURE

The tendency in the late nineteenth century for people to embrace new crazes, fads and ideas boded well for the commercial exploitation of animated pictures. In spite of such potential, however, we have seen that it was not necessarily embraced by viewers as the ‘sensation of the age’ that it was purported to be by exhibitors and venues. As well as experiencing infrequent commercial exhibition in the suburbs, could the muted enthusiasm have also been precipitated by potential interest being diverted elsewhere? The classic Victorian satire *The Diary of a Nobody*¹ highlights various fads which particularly engrossed the Victorian middle classes in the late nineteenth century. As part of his middle-aged, lower middle-class suburban London existence, the fictional diarist Charles Pooter is exposed to fashionable diversions such as spiritualism, the aesthetic movement and bicycling. Indeed, Pooter’s wife Carrie laments that ‘You’ve always got some new-fangled craze’.² Even Pooter’s diary is an ironic nod to the vogue for writing and publishing diaries and memoirs in that period. The bicycling boom was particularly prevalent towards the end of the nineteenth century and was frequently commented upon in the press. One Guernsey newspaper reader complained heartily:

I cannot wonder that you should speak of cycling as a practice insane. It is being terribly overdone, and in London we suffer the full force of the nuisance [...] the horror of crossing a crowded thoroughfare seems to have ten-fold augmented itself since the cycle has invaded the roads. The sharp ring of the machine-bell, or the not less terrifying “chirp” of the alarum, seems to set the nervous system out of gear as nothing else that I know of has the power of doing. [...] Probably it is as you say, that the new rage is stemming the tide of visitors to [Guernsey], and keeping at home those who would otherwise roam farther afield.³

¹ George and Weedon Grossmith's *The Diary of a Nobody* was serialised in *Punch* magazine between 1888-1889 and was first printed in book form in 1892 by the English publisher J.W. Arrowsmith.

² George Grossmith, Weedon Grossmith, and Ed Glinert, *The Diary of a Nobody* (London: Penguin Books, 1999), p. 31.

³ *Jersey Express and Channel Islands Advertiser*, 31 August 1896, p. 1 (letter originally printed in the *Guernsey Comet*).

The Guernsey Evening Press also had a strong view of cyclists, which it stated a little more bluntly: ‘What rivers of ink and what reams of paper have been hurled at the devoted head of the scorching cyclist! He still remains, and we fear he is destined to remain a confounded nuisance’.⁴ The Woolwich press also felt it necessary to point out to its readers that there were ‘many complaints, and especially in the more crowded parts of London, as to the effect of the present ‘bicycle boom,’ the fever of which shows little sign of abating’.⁵ In 1896 another rage caught the public imagination when X-ray mania took hold and occupied a prominent place in the press and scientific journals for a short, but very intense, period of time. What competition did animated pictures encounter from the X-ray craze and did this craze impact upon the public reception of the first cinematograph exhibitions and impede the initial development of cinematography as a viable form of entertainment in the suburbs?

A new kind of rays

Wilhelm Röntgen (or Roentgen), the German physicist, publicly announced his discovery of a ‘new kind of rays’ in a scientific report at the end of December 1895⁶ and felt confident enough to give his first public lecture-demonstration a month later in Würzburg, Germany. Playing upon the use of ‘x’ in mathematics to denote an unknown quantity, Röntgen named them X-rays ‘for the sake of brevity’,⁷ although they were also quickly described as Röntgen Rays despite his humble protestations. The impact of this discovery was extraordinary and both the scientific community and the general public in Europe and America were soon familiar with this so-called ‘new photography’ as X-ray fever took hold in 1896, aided by the fact that Röntgen declined to take out patents on his discovery. Others were therefore free to replicate, improve upon and commercially exploit Röntgen’s work.

A leading British engineering journal noted in February 1896 that the discovery of X-rays had ‘excited such interest that it is hardly possible to look at a paper dealing in any way with scientific matter without finding mention of it, and the somewhat ghastly reproduction of the skeleton hand stares one in the face on every side’.⁸

⁴ *Guernsey Evening Press*, 25 August 1897, p. 2.

⁵ *KICA*, 19 December 1896, p. 2.

⁶ Röntgen submitted his manuscript, ‘*On a New Kind of Rays, A Preliminary Communication*’, to the Würzburg Physical Medical Society on 28th December 1895.

⁷ W. C. Röntgen, ‘Über eine neue Art von Strahlen’, *Sitzungsberichte der Würsburger Physik-med. Gesellschaft* (1895) trans. by Arthur Stanton, ‘On a new Kind of Rays’, *Nature*, 53 (1896), 274-277 (p. 274).

⁸ *Electrical Engineer*, 17.7 February 1896, p. 143.



Fig. 4.1 X-ray of Bertha Röntgen's Hand, December 1895

‘Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen - Photo Gallery’, *Nobelprize.org*, 2015
<http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/physics/laureates/1901/rontgen-photo.html>
[accessed 23 September 2015]

This ‘ghastly [...] skeleton hand’ was in fact an X-ray image of his wife’s hand and upon seeing the image it is widely reported (perhaps somewhat apocryphally) that she exclaimed ‘I have seen my own death’. Lisa Cartwright, the visual culture scholar, considers the significance of this image:

The hand X ray also hinted at the possibility of an abhorrent apparition of a whole X-rayed body, flayed and bloodless. The image was received with both pleasurable fascination and dread, in part because the hand X ray froze in time a moment before the more significant threat posed in the spectacle of the whole-body X ray.⁹

⁹ Lisa Cartwright, *Screening the Body: Tracing Medicine's Visual Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. 115.

In February 1896 a cartoon in *Life* (**Fig. 4.2**) was already alluding to the idea of the X-ray image as a premonition of death, with the farmer's scythe adopting a macabre overtone.



Fig. 4.2 'LOOK PLEASANT PLEASE', *Life*, February 27, 1896.

A modern-day example of the anxiety created by the introduction of a technology like this would be the controversial introduction of full-body scanners in airports in the 1990s which gave a detailed outline of individuals' figures. Prompting concerns by the press and public about privacy, titillation, data protection and radiation, they were eventually replaced with machines capable of producing a more generic image. The advent of X-rays a century earlier enabled, for the first time, the ability for the layman to see the skeleton beneath live human flesh, which had previously been the preserve of medical professionals conducting dissection, amputation or autopsy, or those perusing anatomical illustrations. Given also the predilection for post-mortem photography and death portraits in the Victorian period, it is perhaps unsurprising that X-ray images generated such interest. X-ray images were consequently received variably with horror, fascination, incredulity or humour (depending upon the audience). As well as the potentially shocking visual impact, this peeling off and stripping away of flesh and muscle alluded to serious cultural and societal repercussions relating to class and gender. Tom Gunning describes the penetrating capabilities of X-rays as a mode of vision containing 'disintegrating

violence'.¹⁰ By means of X-rays, everyone could be viewed as equal, irrespective of their socio-economic situation.

In May 1896 *The Electrical Engineer* already appeared somewhat frustrated at the slow pace of research into X-rays and the lack of knowledge and understanding about their origins:

Everyone is ready to suggest this or think that, but no one seems to make any serious effort to grapple with the difficulties which beset each of the three or four theories that have been put forwards as to the nature of the new rays.¹¹

The mysterious nature of X-rays led to various suggestions, caricatures and fears concerning their cause and effect. Some people, for example, thought they were invisible rays which were capable of projecting people's thoughts and feelings. X-ray photography had the ability to skeletonise, dehumanise and penetrate living, human flesh. When science appeared incapable of rationalising a new discovery such as X-rays, many people were willing to turn to the spiritual world in order to seek an answer. The ability to record these mysterious X-rays in the form of photographs may also have revitalised interest in spirit photography. In October 1896 *The Optical Magic Lantern Journal* felt the need to declare:

Physic or Spirit Photography – of late we have received quite a number of letters of enquiry as to the best plates to use, mode of development, means of lighting the subject, conditions required, etc., in order to obtain spirits' photographs. From the style of letters it seems to be apparent by many, we are looked upon as an authority in connection with this subject. We would therefore inform our correspondents that we have no experience whatever in connection with Spirit Photography, consequently are quite unable to afford them the desired information.¹²

In Britain, at least, the discovery of X-rays appears to have been afforded more coverage in the scientific and optical press than the first exhibitions of animated pictures. For example, *The Electrical Engineer* chronicled the development of X-rays almost weekly throughout 1896, whereas animated photographs were referred to only twice that year;

¹⁰ Tom Gunning, 'From the Kaleidoscope to the X-Ray: Urban Spectatorship, Poe, Benjamin, and Traffic in Souls (1913)', *Wide Angle*, 19.4, (October 1997), 25-62, (p. 54).

¹¹ *EE*, 15 May 1896, p. 535.

¹² *OMLJ*, 7.89 (October 1896), p. 154.

with the first simply a passing reference: ‘The Cinematograph. - Mr. Lumière’s invention is to have a prominent position in the programme at the Empire Theatre’.¹³ A month later the journal only briefly noted that ‘colour has been added to Mr. R. W. Paul’s moving pictures’.¹⁴ Throughout 1896 *The Optical Magic Lantern Journal and Photographic Enlarger* also pays particular attention to X-rays in its monthly editions and by May 1896 one correspondent was already reporting the impact that X-rays were starting to have in the lantern world: ‘Lantern evenings at our society meeting have been somewhat at a discount lately, Röntgen ray experiments, or rather demonstrations, having to a certain extent taken their place’.¹⁵ It was not until October 1896 that the same journal felt able to broadly assert that ‘without doubt animated photographs will play a very important part in connection with lantern exhibitions during this season’.¹⁶ This delay was also influenced by the fact that the lantern season was usually quiet during the summer months and so X-rays had got a head-start and their momentum was able to continue throughout the year. Otto Glasser, the pre-eminent Röntgen biographer, included a detailed survey of the initial references to X-rays in the daily press and scientific journals in his comprehensive biography which was first published in German in 1931.¹⁷ Glasser’s painstaking research shows how prevalent X-ray reports and commentary were in the months following their discovery. More recently Simone Natale has researched the discovery and early development of X-ray technology within a media history framework, looking broadly at English, German, French and Italian sources. Natale highlights the emphasis placed on X-rays in the photographic field in 1896 in Italy, which supports my findings in the British press:

The X-ray’s pervasive presence in 1896 photographic culture is striking if we recall that during the same year the invention of the Lumière brothers’ cinematograph was scarcely reported by the photographic press. An examination of the principal Italian journals in the photographic field published during this year confirms that the relevance given to the discovery of X-rays exceeded by far the space accorded to every other contemporary innovation related to the photographic field, including cinema.¹⁸

¹³ *EE*, 17 (13 March 1896), p. 281.

¹⁴ *EE*, 17 (17 April 1896), p. 421.

¹⁵ *OMLJ*, 7.84 (May 1896), p. 87.

¹⁶ *OMLJ*, 7.89 (October 1896), p. 168.

¹⁷ Otto Glasser, *Wilhelm Conrad Rontgen and the Early History of the Roentgen Rays* (San Francisco: Norman Publishing, 1993).

¹⁸ Simone Natale, ‘The Invisible Made Visible: X-rays as attraction and visual medium at the end of the nineteenth century’, *Media History*, 17.4 (2011), 345-358, (p. 349).

Croydon, Ealing and Woolwich were not immune to the fascination of the mysterious rays, and in these towns it was usually the Photographic Society or Camera Club which first gave a demonstration. Woolwich residents had the opportunity to see X-ray demonstrations in February 1896, within only a couple of months of their discovery:

Great doings in the photographic world are expected to take place on Thursday, Friday and Saturday in the next week on the occasion of the exhibition and conversazione of the Woolwich Photographic Society. The meetings will take place at St. John's School, Woolwich. The "New Photography" will form part of the various subjects that are to be practically demonstrated.¹⁹

The exhibition from 27–29 February was evidently successful as the local paper described it as 'one of the best local shows that has been seen anywhere. [...] Not only are the pictures attractive, but there are experiments to be seen with the new photography of invisible objects'.²⁰

The Ealing Photographic Society, founded in 1890, met fortnightly on a Thursday and also held a monthly lantern lecture at the Public Buildings. In 1896 the society was in a 'peculiarly happy position' with 'an increased number of members exhibiting an increased interest in its work'.²¹ On 14 March 1896, the Ealing Photographic Society joined forces with the Ealing Natural Science and Microscopical Society to give a demonstration of the "X" or Röntgen Rays at the Victoria Hall. Herbert John Dowsing, the lecturer, was an electrical engineer with a special interest in radiation and he submitted numerous patents in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in relation to this field. At the Ealing event, Dowsing showed a number of X-ray images produced by his assistant Mr. Richardson. This evocative description reveals the impact and the horror such images were capable of producing, and the perverse pleasure that was taken in viewing them:

They were somewhat ghastly, consisting mainly of skeletonized hands, feet, ankles, and other sections of the body. Mr. Dowsing explained that some of them constituted parts of prominent local men, but he refrained the earnest entreaties of the audience to 'name.' One slide, excellent in its horror, was thrown on the screen, and the audience was somewhat at a loss to comprehend

¹⁹ *KICA*, 22 February 1896, p. 4.

²⁰ *KICA*, 29 February 1896, p. 5.

²¹ *MCT*, 17 October 1896, p. 5.

what it was. ‘Ah! don’t you know it,’ exclaimed Mr. Dowsing, with most unscientific levity, ‘THAT’S A TRILBY!’²²

Dowsing also borrowed various articles from the audience ‘such as purses, cigarette cases, aluminium watch boxes, and jewellery’ and took X-rays of them. He used the Photographic Society’s dark room to ‘develop’ them and made them into lantern slides, all within the space of only a quarter of an hour.²³ This is at odds with Richard Crangle’s view that X-ray equipment was ‘delicate and required skilled manufacture and operation, and its results were slow to appear and difficult to realise successfully. In contrast the majority of moving picture equipment which hit the market in 1896 and 1897 was relatively simple to make and use, readily portable, and adapted to existing projection methods’.²⁴ Although Crangle makes this comparison specifically in relation to music hall entertainment, it is revealing that X-ray experiments were being successfully conducted in Ealing only two months after the first public exhibition in Germany. Dowsing’s X-ray slides worked well and he was also able to take X-rays of various items and produce X-ray lantern slides within just a matter of minutes. This first demonstration was followed swiftly by a lecture in April by the Ealing Photographic Society, which indicates the interest that X-rays were generating:

A meeting of this society was held in the Lecture Hall of the Ealing Municipal Buildings on Thursday week, the president (Mr H. W. Peal) presiding. Mr Dowsing, who recently gave a lecture and demonstration in the Victoria Hall on the subject of the ‘x’ or (Rontgen) rays, kindly attended in order to afford members of the society some further information regarding the production of those mysterious rays.²⁵

It was not unusual for exhibitors or manufacturers of cinematograph apparatus, such as Friese-Greene and W. Watson and Sons, to venture into the field of X-ray photography. There is some uncertainty, however, as to whether Banks exhibited X-ray slides in Ealing in November 1896 in conjunction with animated pictures. Although the

²² *MCT*, 21 March 1896, p. 6.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Richard Crangle, ‘Saturday Night at the X-rays – The Moving Picture and The New Photography in Britain, 1896’, in *Celebrating 1895 The Centenary of Cinema*, ed. by John Fullerton (London: John Libbey & Company, 1998), pp. 138-144, (pp. 139-140).

²⁵ *MCT*, 25 April 1896, p. 6.

absence of a specific reference to X-rays in the Ealing press casts some doubt, there are however specific references to ‘photographs taken by Rontgen X Rays projected on the screen’ during earlier engagements that year²⁶ which suggest that he did use X-ray lantern slides as part of his entertainment. Banks evidently had an innovative programming strategy, given that he had introduced the cinematograph to his entertainment format. It would therefore have been in keeping with his strategy to also incorporate the other latest photographic technology of X-rays.

A Croydon journalist was given an opportunity to experience X-rays in person and his observations reveal a far greater interest in X-rays than animated photographs. His review of fireworks and festivities taking place at the Crystal Palace in August 1896 included this pithy remark concerning animated photographs: ‘there was a representation of the Lumière Cinématographe, a variety show which drew an immense crowd’.²⁷ There was no commentary on the films or the apparatus, whereas his description of an X-ray entertainment was verbose in comparison:

An entertainment which has come to stay, and which was given several times during the day, is the invention of Mr. Trewey, of Cinématographe fame. Described as a revelation of the Röntgen rays, it consists in placing some person in a dark recess, and then causing him or her to change apparently to a skeleton, after which the bony figure either disappears entirely or returns to the original form. Taking place without any hiding behind curtains or enclosure in boxes, the transformation looks like a dissolving view. The writer of this report suggested that the person operated on was juggled away when the skeleton appeared, but he changed his mind after being invited to stand in the recess. His friends announced with horror that he had become a skeleton, but he was totally unaware of the fact. He had not moved, nor could he find anything to support his suspicion that the picture of a skeleton was thrown upon him. He was much more mystified after being operated upon than before.²⁸

Certainly any reader of this article would be led to believe that X-rays were the predominant form of entertainment in terms of new photography. It could, however, be

²⁶ *Folkestone Herald*, 27 June 1896, p. 6; *JEA*, 24 August 1896, p. 3. See Chapter Six for a detailed case study showing where Horace Banks exhibited the Vivaceographe during 1896 and 1897 in Britain.

²⁷ *CA*, 5 September 1896, p. 7.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

argued that if the journalist had featured in an animated picture, there would have been a different focus to the article as his wonder and amazement largely derives from his personal experience. Nevertheless, it remains significant that the journalist had the opportunity to physically experience the effects of X-rays in person.

Prior to the inauguration of the October 1896 winter session of the Croydon Camera Club, the President announced that ‘amongst the subjects of the first few technical lectures will be a complete demonstration of the latest methods of ‘shadowgraphs with X Rays’.’²⁹ A couple of weeks later he addressed the members and reviewed ‘current matters of photographic interest. [...] In conclusion he glanced at X Ray work and photographs in motion, and announced that unusually interesting demonstrations by distinguished specialists of the foregoing branches of photography would be given to members’.³⁰ Yet towards the end of 1896 the public interest in X-rays, which had received extensive press coverage to the point of saturation, was beginning to wane. In Croydon, for example, when a bazaar was reviewed in December it was only briefly mentioned that ‘Professor X exhibited the Rontgen Rays’. The Grand Kinematograph, on the other hand, which had been demonstrated at the bazaar by Bender & Co, was the subject of a lengthy and detailed report and was described as a ‘marvellous machine’ and ‘an entire success’.³¹

Satirical jokes and cartoons appeared in the media immediately following the discovery of X-rays, but throughout 1896 there was a growing fear concerning the mysterious power and possible effects of these rays. *The Optical Magic Lantern Journal* noted that ‘a scare is going the rounds of many papers, to the effect that shortly after one submits his hand to the Rontgen rays the nails of the fingers will gradually detach themselves. Strange to say, many people accept this statement as gospel’.³² Unfortunately these fears were not unfounded. The pioneers of X-rays and machine operators, along with medical patients and the paying public, could be subject to severe side effects triggered by overexposure to radiation, including burns, lesions, hair loss and skin cancer. As the general public became increasingly conscious of the possible dangers of X-rays, and as their limited entertainment value began to wane after an intense period of publicity, they were appropriated by the medical field where their strengths truly lay. This enabled public attention to be re-focused on the cinematograph which could now fully embrace the label of the ‘new photography’. Given the excitement that X-rays had quickly generated, if *The Diary of a Nobody* had been serialised during 1896 it seems likely that the enthusiastic Pooter would have been initially enticed by the mysterious rays (most probably with comic

²⁹ CA, 26 September 1896, p. 8.

³⁰ CA, 10 October 1896, p. 8.

³¹ CSG, 16 December 1896, p. 5.

³² OMLJ, 7.88 (September 1896), p. 139.

results). If Pooter's world was revisited just one year later it would probably have been a different matter entirely, with the cinematograph playing a starring role.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SUBURBAN EXPERIENCE: DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

Conducting case studies of Croydon, Ealing and Woolwich has shown the importance that local research can play in developing a greater understanding of film exhibition practices and reception in this early period. From these particular case studies we have also gleaned much about life in general in Ealing, Croydon and Woolwich. Located a similar geographical distance from the central London entertainment meccas, animated pictures arrived in these three suburbs at around the same time in 1896. To some extent there was a degree of similarity, but there were also many discrepancies which make it impossible to generalise about the suburban film-going and film-viewing experience in this very early period. Much of the detail that informs these case studies derives from the local newspapers which published advertisements for the venues which were starting to exhibit animated pictures. There was a tradition of previewing entertainments on offer in the locality and then reviewing them, often whilst the entertainment was still taking place. Consequently, the combination of advertisements, previews and reviews facilitate the construction of a detailed chronology and broader picture of the early film shows in these towns. We have seen in Croydon that the local press frequently went into great detail regarding cinematograph displays, and we are fortunate that several of the newspapers from the period, particularly the *Croydon Society Gossip*, have survived. There appears to have been reluctance on the part of *The Middlesex County Times* to comment on animated pictures in depth, and the language used in their reviews may suggest a sense of aloofness or superiority towards animated pictures or at least a lack of interest by this particular newspaper or journalist towards the new photography. In Woolwich, too, there was generally less newspaper commentary concerning local film exhibitions than in Croydon, and this became more pronounced over the course of 1897 as the initial excitement about and novelty of the cinematograph began to diminish.

The first film exhibitions in Ealing and Woolwich coincidentally both commenced on 9 November 1896, whilst films arrived in Croydon a little earlier at the end of September. In some respects there was a shared suburban film viewing experience, and we will see in chapter six that at the point of promotion and reception there was a focus on movement, speed, travel and life-like motions through the use of specific words and phraseology in advertisements and reviews, and also in terms of the film subjects that were shown. Animated photography initially elicited curiosity and wonder but there was also a

focus on the quality and steadiness of the machines exhibited in these towns, and a growing expectation of better apparatus as time progressed; praise was duly offered when any impediments were overcome which might otherwise detract from the viewing experience. We have also seen confusion with various derivations of cinematograph and exhibitor names assigned in error by newspapers or venues. When the cinematograph was exhibited in these towns it was typically the main attraction in either an entertainment or educational setting, often supplemented by other amusements. Another common feature is the diverse range of venues showcasing the cinematograph, demonstrating that it was not always a commercial venture and certainly not the sole preserve of the music hall during 1896 and 1897. Admission costs were generally consistent in these towns and they ranged typically from sixpence to one shilling, although we do see ‘popular’ admission prices as low as threepence offered in Woolwich, most likely to cater to the workers from the Woolwich arsenal. In fact, *The Kentish Independent* bemoaned of Barnard’s Theatre Royal that there were ‘seats [...] to suit all classes, with only the one fault, as the auctioneers say, of being too cheap’.¹

Another parallel that can be drawn from the case studies is that there was an opportunity for the local audiences to witness at least one good-quality cinematograph with a competent operator or lecturer. The Vivaceographe had been engaged at Olympia; the Theatrograph had secured its initial home at the Alhambra; Phil and Bernard also went on to have a spell at the Alhambra; and Dyson had secured a six week run at the Marlborough Hall where the Lumière Cinématographe was first famously exhibited in London. There was further overlap as several showmen visited more than one of these three towns, which was perhaps due to their similar geographical proximity to London. This connection has unexpectedly provided another layer to my research. Robert Paul exhibited the Theatrograph in Croydon and Woolwich; Banks and Greaves exhibited the Vivaceographe in Croydon and Ealing; and Prosser Roberts exhibited his cinematograph in Croydon and Woolwich in consecutive weeks. The scheduling of Prosser Roberts’s engagements is particularly enlightening as it provides the opportunity for direct comparison. In Woolwich he received a somewhat lacklustre review, and we see a slightly more positive reaction to his cinematograph in Croydon, although perhaps the fact that he was a local man played some part in this. By considering his displays in conjunction with each other it has also been possible to ascertain more comprehensively the films he showed in each town.

Although the time interval between the engagements for the Theatrograph and Vivaceographe may be too long in which to make a meaningful connection in terms of the

¹ *KICA*, 26 December 1896, p. 4.

films that were shown, a general comparison can be made. We find variations in each of these areas, despite the consistent characteristic of having the same exhibitors using the same apparatus. Paul came to Croydon with great fanfare in October 1896 and was the main attraction at the opening of the highly-anticipated new variety hall, and the local newspapers commented on the programme and films in detail. Yet eight months later at Barnard's Theatre Royal in Woolwich the Theatrograph was consigned to the bottom of an advertisement for this lower class music hall and there were no reviews in the local press. This seems to correspond with a more muted response beginning to emerge towards the cinematograph in Woolwich during 1897, which was not helped by the Parisian Bazaar fire entering the public consciousness. The films exhibited by Banks and Greaves in Ealing in November 1896 were not specifically referred to, but the reviews were at least positive and appreciative of the possibilities suggested by the Vivaceographe. In comparison, as part of their Public Hall entertainments in Croydon the following year, the local newspapers do not appear to have remarked upon the Vivaceographe. Film shows had not become so entrenched in the local leisure calendar to not warrant commentary in the press, but given the high number of opportunities available to see animated pictures in Croydon in 1897, the fact that the animated pictures at these one-off lectures were overlooked was perhaps not unusual.

The exhibition of the cinematograph in Ealing was infrequent in this period, and the Vivaceographe was the only apparatus to be exhibited in the town in 1896 over three days. We then see short bursts of activity taking place every three or four months in 1897. The longest running exhibition of animated pictures in Ealing was for a week, as part of the Jubilee Bazaar in 1897. In contrast, following its public debut in Woolwich in early November 1896, Phil and Bernard's Oscinematoscope was exhibited on three separate occasions at the same Woolwich venue within the space of two months, for approximately a week at a time. Yet, after a burst of activity in February 1897, there was a delay of several months before the cinematograph was seen again locally, and the Oscinematoscope was not brought back at all that year. In Croydon, by comparison, there were eighteen different occasions on which to view the cinematograph during a period of only fifteen months. This high number was bolstered by the inclusion of the locally-made Grand Kinematograph (Velograph) which was exhibited on seven different occasions, in a variety of venues, throughout 1896 and 1897. By the end of 1896 we already begin to see the embryonic origins of Croydon becoming a filmmaking hub. Not only were Bender and Langfier in a position to show films locally, but they were also able to show locally-produced films. Such home-grown talent was a precursor for future Croydon film

companies like Cricks and Martin, Rosie Films and the Clarendon Film Company, which came to the fore in the 1900s.

Local competition, in conjunction with the availability of venues that were suitable for accommodating the cinematograph, clearly played an important role regarding the prevalence of cinematograph displays. By the late 1890s Croydon was a substantial town with a range of entertainment venues capable of securing good quality acts, in addition to boasting a number of philanthropic and educational clubs and societies, which resulted in greater competition for audiences than Woolwich or Ealing was able to offer. It was not until the mid-to-late nineteenth century that Ealing had begun to develop from a village into a town, and reviewing *The Middlesex County Times* in 1896 and 1897 reveals a somewhat parochial mentality. Although Woolwich by the late 1890s was a thriving industrial town with a large working-class population, the social and leisure activities that were available were on a smaller scale than found in Croydon. It was in the interest of suburban entertainment venues to secure the latest attraction or novelty in light of potential local and metropolitan competition, and the *Croydon Society Gossip* nicely summarised the situation in late 1897:

Amusements are certainly booming in Croydon just now. On Saturday night the Grand was crammed [...] The Palace was filled to a state of suffocation, and there was a huge audience at the Empire [...] Is it that people go in larger numbers the more places that there are to go to, or that folks who used to go to town, now patronise local ventures? A little of each, I suspect. The standard of the local shows is rising every year, forced upwards by healthy competition, and the result is a benefit all round. The only quarter from which a complaint may be expected is the London houses, which cannot possibly remain unaffected by the steady growth of suburban theatres. Croydon itself has certainly benefitted. Did it ever strike you what a big industrial concern a theatre is? There is not a trade in the borough that doesn't minister to the wants of the local playhouse [...] and the amount of money put into circulation through the medium of the local theatres [...] must be enormous.²

Over the course of 1896 and 1897 there were common denominators, such as public holidays and the Jubilee, which provide another means by which to compare the film experience in each town. Apart from the Jubilee bazaar, films were not shown at

² CSG, 29 September 1897, p. 13.

significant times of the year in Ealing but were incorporated into general entertainments that were not seasonally scheduled. This is another contrast to Croydon, where film shows often coincided with festive periods and special occasions. In Woolwich, apart from a festive entertainment in 1896 and Jubileetide in 1897, the cinematograph displays did not correspond with holiday periods and were shown predominantly as part of a programme which would most likely have taken place in any case.

It is curious that in the Ealing press there was no reference to specific film subjects or titles, except a brief mention of the Jubilee procession film exhibited by Walter Cole in October 1897. This is in stark contrast to Croydon (and to a lesser extent Woolwich) where the film subjects and titles were often referred to in press advertisements and reviews. It particularly made sense in Croydon to publicise and describe the local films by Bender & Co as they would have been of special interest to local audiences. The reluctance to refer to specific films in Ealing perhaps suggests a greater interest in the technology and process of viewing films, rather than the subject matter *per se*. Piecing together film titles from reviews and advertisements has indicated that generally exhibitors showed a mixed selection including topical, actualities, street scenes, seaside views, comic scenes, and of course local interest films in Croydon. When films were referred to in reviews, typically one or two were marked out for special praise, or regarded as superior in some way. Where specific films are not referred to, in some cases it has been possible to determine what might have been shown by conducting a wider survey of an exhibitor's engagements around the same time period. By looking more broadly, where it has been sensible to do so, this has supplied valuable detail which has further informed these case studies and enabled the identification of a broader range of films in the collections of Phil and Bernard and Prosser Roberts.³

Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in June 1897 may have inadvertently and fortuitously injected new life into the popularity of cinematography, at a time when the fate of the cinematograph appeared uncertain. The Jubilee celebrations offered communities the opportunity to unite and celebrate together at a local level, whilst also providing them with the sense that they were part of something on a much larger and national scale. The numerous Jubilee procession films also enabled audiences to witness and experience the magnificent spectacle for themselves. Indeed, it proved far more straightforward and economical for people in the suburbs of London to watch Jubilee films in a local space rather than trying to catch a glimpse of Queen Victoria from an expensive or crowded spot on the processional route. Prime locations were being advertised for sale in the Woolwich

³ For Phil and Bernard's film selection, see appendices 5 (i) and 5 (ii); For Prosser Roberts' film selection, see appendices 2 (v) and 5 (iv).

press at hugely inflated prices at least two months prior to the Jubilee, with the Diamond Jubilee Syndicate, for instance, advertising ‘from 2 to 6 Guineas, or Windows from £25 to £300 (the latter overlooking the Ceremony in Front of St Paul’s Cathedral)’.⁴ Those fortunate enough to have been part of the three-million strong crowd on the day also had the opportunity to re-experience the excitement and re-view the action on film, becoming revenants as well as voyeurs, and perhaps even hoping to catch a glimpse of themselves on screen.

Given that the procession lasted several hours, and that filmmakers were limited by the length of film available to them, they endeavoured to record footage focussing on interesting moments, iconic views of the city, and shots of Queen Victoria herself. The American writer Mark Twain who was present on the day, apparently said ‘it was to be a spectacle for the Kodak, not for the pen’.⁵ The scale and formation of the procession lent itself very well to this type of segmented filming, as the succession of discrete squadrons, regiments and dignitaries passed by. Consequently, the Jubilee films are unique in this period as an exhibitor could show a set of films from the procession, which necessitated a strong element of narration, description and explanation for an audience who were essentially viewing the edited highlights. Film historian Luke McKernan has shown a special interest in Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee, not least in his contributions to the Jubilee centenary in 1997. He produced a multimedia show to mark the centenary, recreating the momentous procession by taking modern audiences on a virtual tour of the processional route by means of films, eye-witness accounts and photographs. McKernan acted as narrator and there was also piano accompaniment. McKernan has made available the text of the show for reference purposes, and the format of narration and films provides a real flavour of what an audience in Croydon, Ealing or Woolwich in 1897 would have experienced when watching Jubilee films.⁶

The speed at which the Jubilee films were produced meant they could be shown as recent news items. Of course, as well as contributing topical interest, the Jubilee films also triumphed in terms of pure entertainment and spectacle, by showcasing iconic views of London and celebrating themes of royalty, patriotism, Empire, pageantry, pomp and ceremony. The subject-matter of the films, combined with the series-format, provided an opportunity to re-energise suburban audiences towards the cinematograph. The Jubilee injected new life into the cinematograph at a time when the novelty of the new medium had already begun to wear off, and when the technical side of the apparatus was not

⁴ *KICA*, 17 April 1897, p. 1.

⁵ Luke McKernan, *Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee* <http://lukemckernan.com/wp-content/uploads/queen_victoria_diamond_jubilee> [accessed 24 September 2015] (p. 11).

⁶ *Ibid.*

necessarily matching viewer expectations. At a local level the Jubilee celebrations included community events such as street parties, concerts and entertainments, all of which would have engendered feelings of excitement and positivity; to some extent subsequent viewings of the Jubilee on film would surely have been infused by these feelings, making audiences even more receptive.

The discovery of X-rays and the invention of the apparatus capable of projecting animated pictures occurred around the same time, were taken up within very similar discourses and practices, yet they quickly took diverging paths. Due to the availability of information concerning X-rays, if an entrepreneurial engineer or scientifically-minded lecturer could source the necessary apparatus and materials, they could produce X-ray images. Consequently, it was perfectly feasible for an engineer such as Herbert Dowsing to conduct an X-ray demonstration in Ealing so soon after the initial discovery. As *The Middlesex County Times* pointed out: 'The 'new photography' dispenses with the old adjunct of a camera, and employs instead apparatus familiar enough to an electrician'.⁷ On the other hand, an engineer such as Robert Paul chose to pursue a sideline in cinematographs. With animated pictures, however, patents for projection apparatus were largely in place and showmen or lanternists wishing to utilise cinematographic equipment were initially obliged to purchase the apparatus from a limited number of manufacturers from early 1896, rather than having the ability to quickly construct their own equipment.

X-rays initially dominated the newspapers and photographic journals, far more so than we see with animated photography. Both media were frequently (and erroneously in relation to X-rays) described in the press and by exhibitors as the 'new photography' which often led to confusion amongst the public. X-rays received far more exposure in the media throughout much of 1896, helped by the detailed and wide dissemination of their discovery, and the accompanying images in the press. X-rays began life as a scientific phenomenon, but the focus quickly moved to their entertainment capabilities as they were considered a visual attraction in their own right. As their entertainment value reached saturation, and as fears about their effects spread, they were re-absorbed into the scientific world and attention was re-focused on animated photography, enabling animated pictures to come to the fore after a slow but steady burn.

Having looked in close detail at three towns on the edge of the metropolis in order to better understand the beginnings of the cinema in a suburban setting, my next case study takes a different approach by attending to the exhibition practices of one particular showman in order to provide a broader context to the analysis. By researching the history

⁷ *MCT*, 21 March 1896, p. 6.

of the Banks and Greaves partnership, with a particular focus on Horace Banks, I will reveal where the Vivaceographe was exhibited, how it was received, and the types of films Banks was showing in this period. The case study will also provide an insight into what attracted a lanternist like Banks to take a risk by investing in the new medium of animated photography.

CHAPTER SIX

EXHIBITING INITIATIVE: THE ROLE OF HORACE BANKS

I have explored the suburban experience of animated pictures during 1896 and 1897 through detailed case studies of Croydon, Ealing and Woolwich. However it is important to consider in more depth the role of the lanternists and travelling exhibitors who purchased and showcased the limited number of cinematograph projectors available in 1896, and who took animated pictures to public halls, variety halls, and pier pavilions. In this chapter I reveal and appraise the exhibition practices of the little-known Banks and Greaves partnership, primarily focussing on the lanternist Horace G. Banks. He toured around Britain and the Channel Isles throughout much of 1896 and 1897, with the cinematograph quickly becoming an integral part of his dioramic lantern exhibition.



Fig. 6.1 Horace G. Banks, 1898.
'Image Record', *Slides.uni-trier.de*, 2015 <<http://www.slides.uni-trier.de/image/index.php?id=8005767&itemid=6003064>> [accessed 25 September 2015]

We have already seen that Banks was the first person to show animated pictures in Ealing. Conducting original research into his exhibition practices provides a new insight into the pattern of early film exhibition and reception outside of metropolitan areas, as well as contextualising the Ealing exhibition. Drawing upon reviews and advertisements in the

local and trade press, I track Banks on his tour and develop a detailed picture of Banks' exhibition practices and how they altered over time, noting the films he projected, the audience reception, the marketing and frequency of his engagements, and the locations and venues he visited.

Charles Musser and Carol Nelson have researched the work of the American travelling exhibitor Lyman H. Howe and have identified two forms of exhibition practices in America in the 1890s and early 1900s., which they define as 'exhibition services' and 'travelling exhibitions'.¹ Exhibition services were available in larger urban centres, for several weeks at a time, often forming part of the programme at vaudeville theatres. Travelling exhibitors, on the other hand, 'usually provided a complete entertainment – not only films, projector, and projectionist, but people to create sound accompaniment, the advance man, and promotional materials'.² It will be seen that Banks was more aligned to this latter category, travelling from town to town, usually accompanied by a small troupe of musicians, staying a maximum of a week or two, providing a concert party entertainment that was a combination of dioramic tours, lantern slides and films. It is only by tracking his travels with a cinematograph projector that we can appreciate the vital role that Banks played in suburban and seaside areas during the initial years of film exhibition.

The Banks and Greaves Partnership

Horace George Banks was born in 1858 in Stepney, East London. His father was described a commercial agent and sea captain, and Horace clearly inherited an adventurous streak as he set off at the age of thirteen to travel the seas for nearly a decade. His business partner-to-be, Leonard William Greaves, was born in 1868 in Newington, Southwark. After returning permanently to England, Banks took up photography and lantern work. He began lantern lecturing publicly in 1890 and met Greaves the following year. They formed a business partnership in March 1894, trading under the name 'Banks and Greaves' and set up their premises at 366 Clapham Road, in Clapham, South London. Marketing themselves as opticians, their main trade was dealing in photographic and lantern equipment. Banks became the more well-known of the partnership through his lantern lecturing and indeed by 1898 he was being described in the lantern press as one of the 'prominent men in the lantern world' who had 'come rapidly to the front'.³ Whilst Banks put up most of the capital and toured around the country with his dioramic entertainment, Greaves concentrated on the manufacturing side of the business in Clapham. When Banks retired

¹ Charles Musser and Carol Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures: Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Travelling Exhibition, 1880-1920* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 58-59.

² *Ibid.*, p. 59.

³ 'Prominent Men in the Lantern World No. XVI – Mr Horace Banks', *OMLJ*, 9.109 (June 1898), p. 88.

early from the business in August 1900, Greaves continued to operate alone under the name 'Banks and Greaves' until 1906.⁴ As their advertisement in *The Magic Lantern Journal* shows (Fig. 6.2), the business dealt in a variety of optical and photographic instruments and equipment.

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ADVERTISEMENTS.

BANKS & GREAVES,

*** OPTICIANS, ***

366, Clapham Rd., S.W.

All kinds of . . .

**Photographic Apparatus,
Optical Lanterns & Accessories,
Optical & Scientific Instruments,
Spectacles and Folders.**

Slides made from

CUSTOMERS' NEGATIVES & DRAWINGS

By Wet Collodion or Dry Plate Process.

Artistic Colouring.

ALL KINDS OF OUT-DOOR PHOTOGRAPHY.

Fig. 6.2 Advertisement for Banks and Greaves, *The Magic Lantern Journal and Photographic Enlarger Almanac and Annual 1896-1897*, p. 73.

⁴ Information concerning the history of the partnership from Greaves' perspective is contained in his 1906 bankruptcy papers held in The National Archives at Kew. Bankruptcy Cases, High Court Papers, BT 226/1935.

Banks was clearly quick to seize an opportunity and was not averse to taking risks, incorporating animated photographs into his existing programme and seeking bookings for 'the Wonderful Vivaceographe' in April 1896 (**Fig. 6.3**). The first appearance of the Vivaceographe may have been in London at Olympia, the well-known Kensington amusement site, and it was a bold move to introduce animated pictures into his successful lantern entertainment so soon after the first commercial displays in London by Robert Paul and Félicien Trewéy, and to inaugurate the Vivaceographe at as prestigious a venue as Olympia.



Fig. 6.3 Advertisement for Banks and Greaves, *The Era*, 25 April 1896, p. 24.

The Palace of Perpetual Pleasure

Olympia was a large-scale pleasure resort which had opened its doors in December 1886 and featured grand attractions, spectacles and side shows. Described as the 'Palace of Perpetual Pleasure' with 'acres of fairylike loveliness',⁵ it offered 'eleven hours of continual pleasure'⁶ and was therefore an ideal place to showcase the latest rage. Animated pictures were soon shown 'at frequent intervals during the day',⁷ forming part of the daily programme which included varied entertainments such as sporting and military tournaments, Shakespeare productions, circus attractions and even balloon ascents in the grounds.

According to John Barnes, Paul's Theatrograph was exhibited at Olympia from March 1896: 'the first performance took place on 21 March, and the following morning *The Daily Chronicle* reported that 'the large audience have been greatly pleased with Mr Paul's Theatrograph'.⁸ There are, however, source discrepancies concerning this report,⁹

⁵ *Graphic*, 16 May 1896, p. 5.

⁶ *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 22 March 1896, p. 10.

⁷ *Daily Chronicle and Clerkenwell News*, 23 March 1896, p. 4.

⁸ Barnes, *vol. I*, p. 114.

⁹ Barnes uncovered *The Daily Chronicle* report in a secondary source. He describes how it was 'quoted in an advertisement published in *The Era*, 8 August 1896, p. 15' but explains that 'the relevant page is missing from the files of the *Daily Chronicle* at Colindale', Barnes, *vol. I*, p. 280. *The Era* advertisement lists press reviews for the Theatrograph, including one from the *Daily Chronicle* purportedly dated 22 March (which was a Sunday). However, further investigation shows that the *Daily Chronicle* was not published on Sundays. The *Daily Chronicle* does, however, have the same quote in its edition on Monday 23 March, p. 3. The date of the report, as printed in *The Era*, is therefore incorrect and the relevant page is missing from the files at Colindale because there was no such issue. It should also be noted that the advertisement published in *The Era*, 8 August 1896 is found on page 25, and not page 15.

and other reports suggest that the Theatrograph may have been exhibited at Olympia from Friday 20 March 1896, one day earlier than previously thought. The *Daily Chronicle* featured an advertisement that day announcing ‘The Theatrograph [...] Now showing at Olympia’¹⁰ and *The Daily News* also refers to the Theatrograph as ‘the latest attraction at Olympia’,¹¹ which implies it is a current event.

There is also some confusion concerning the conclusion of Paul’s season at Olympia, and the commencement of Banks and Greaves’ exhibition. Olympia advertisements in The *Daily Chronicle* list either the Theatrograph, or use the generic term ‘animated pictures’ throughout April, May and early June. We know that Paul’s ‘Theatrographe’ was still being advertised in an Olympia programme on 6 June 1896.¹² There was also an advertisement for the ‘Theatrographe’ on Saturday 13 June,¹³ followed by a generic advertisement for ‘animated pictures’ on Monday 15 June.¹⁴ The earliest references made specifically to the Vivaceographe at Olympia are found in an Olympia programme for 16 June 1896¹⁵ and advertisements in The *Daily Chronicle* and *The Standard* from the same date.¹⁶ This suggests that the Theatrograph was exhibited until at least 13 June and the Vivaceographe followed suit from 16 June at the latest.

Whilst the Theatrograph and Vivaceographe were being exhibited at Olympia, the Olympia Limited Company was going through a period of instability. It was performing below expectations during 1896, and the situation was exacerbated by the unexpected death by the general manager of Olympia, Sir Augustus Harris, on 22 June 1896. *The Pall Mall Gazette* reported the poor state of affairs a couple of days later:

To-day, at four o’clock, the shareholders of Olympia meet there to receive a statement of the affairs of the company which will be submitted. It will be a sorry statement, we fear. In fact, the unfortunate concern, after a succession of ill-luck, has passed into the hands of a receiver. Matters have apparently been going from bad to worse since the reconstructions, and they have not been improved by the sudden death of Sir Augustus Harris.¹⁷

¹⁰ *Daily Chronicle*, 20 March 1896, p. 1.

¹¹ *Daily News*, 20 March 1896, p. 3.

¹² Official Programme Olympia Limited, 6 June 1896. Programme is held in the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum, University of Exeter.

¹³ *Daily Chronicle*, 13 June 1896, p. 6.

¹⁴ *Daily Chronicle*, 15 June 1896, p. 4.

¹⁵ Official Programme Olympia Limited, Tuesday 16 June 1896. Programme is held in the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum, University of Exeter.

¹⁶ *Daily Chronicle*, 16 June 1896, p. 6; *Standard*, 16 June 1896, p. 6.

¹⁷ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 24 June 1896, p. 4.

The Era's report of the shareholders' meeting also described how attendance had been 'steadily declining' since Easter.¹⁸ Despite these tribulations, animated pictures appear to have been a popular entertainment at Olympia, with Paul's Theatrograph being exhibited there consistently from March until June. With cost cutting in mind, perhaps the less well-known Vivaceographe was brought in as a more economical way of showing animated pictures.

Interestingly, official Olympia programme advertisements for the Theatrograph and the Vivaceographe from June 1896 are practically identical, save that the Theatrograph was advertised as 'the same as now being shown at the Alhambra'.¹⁹

IN THE PALMARIUM.
THE ELECTROPHONE,
 Round the London Theatres in 15 Minutes.

 IN THE PALMARIUM.
THE
THEATROGRAPHE
 (PAUL'S)
ANIMATED PICTURES,
 IN BRILLIANT COLOURS.
 The most wonderful Scientific Marvel of the Age.

 THE SAME AS NOW BEING SHOWN AT THE ALHAMBRA.

 MARVELLOUS MOVING PICTURES FROM REAL LIFE.
 ADMISSION SIXPENCE.

 IN THE PALMARIUM.
THEATRE ROYAL, RICHARDSON,

Fig. 6.4

IN THE PALMARIUM.
THE ELECTROPHONE,
 Round the London Theatres in 15 Minutes.

 IN THE PALMARIUM.
THE
VIVACEOGRAPHE
 (BANKS & GREAVES)
ANIMATED PICTURES,
 IN BRILLIANT COLOURS.
 The most wonderful Scientific Marvel of the Age.

 MARVELLOUS MOVING PICTURES FROM REAL LIFE.
 ADMISSION SIXPENCE.

 IN THE PALMARIUM.
THE NEW SHAKESPEARE.

MERRY MACBETH

Fig. 6.5

Fig. 6.4 Official Programme Olympia Limited, 6 June 1896

Fig. 6.5 Official Programme Olympia Limited, 16 June 1896

Courtesy of the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum, University of Exeter.

The content and visual similarity of these two advertisements suggests that the Olympia management were responsible for the wording, rather than the exhibitors themselves. Along with much hyperbole, the advert for the Theatrograph draws attention to the fact that the animated pictures were being shown 'In Brilliant Colours'. This would have been possible as Paul had begun experimenting with coloured film by early April, most likely by

¹⁸ *Era*, 27 June 1896, p. 16.

¹⁹ Official Programme Olympia Limited, Saturday 6 June 1896. Programme is held in the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum, University of Exeter.

hand-colouring each frame.²⁰ The advert for the Vivaceographe also emphasises coloured film in the same way, although other venues Banks exhibited in during 1896 and 1897 do not make this claim. The two Olympia advertisements also include the same stock expressions, ‘The most wonderful Scientific Marvel of the Age’ and ‘Marvellous Moving Pictures From Real Life’, leaving us with the impression that the scientific concept of animated photography was the main draw, rather than the apparatus, exhibitors or films which could be so easily interchanged from week to week.

Olympia programmes advertised the Palmarium as the building in which to see the Vivaceographe.²¹ A covered way linked the Palmarium to the Winter Gardens and there would have been crowds of people milling through this area to access the gardens in the early summer months. A description from the time of Barnum and Bailey’s circus visit in 1898 helps to conjure up an impression of this majestic Victorian space:

Adjoining the main building or Olympia proper is another large, semi-circular building, with the flat side joining the former, and called the Palmarium. [...] The central roof of the Palmarium is supported by massive iron columns representing palm trees.²²

Film historian Richard Brown has established that the Theatrograph was actually housed within a purpose-built structure which lay partly inside the Palmarium, seating up to 100 people.²³ Certainly the entertainment needed to be detached from any other attractions on offer as patrons were charged an additional sixpence for their viewing pleasure. Covered with corrugated iron on both sides and the top, this would also have helped to combat any issues of light affecting the experience. It is likely that the Vivaceographe was also exhibited in this enclosure. It is currently not known which films Banks exhibited or how they were received by the paying public at Olympia. Reports of subsequent exhibitions around the country will, however, provide us with a flavour of the films that were shown by Banks and the audience reaction to them.

Banks and Greaves’ residency at Olympia lasted for approximately two weeks. We know that their appearance on 16 June was not a one-off as an Olympia programme from

²⁰ *Electrical Engineer*, 17 (17 April 1896), p. 421.

²¹ Official Programme Olympia Limited, 18 June 1896 (held in the British Film Institute Special Collections) and Official Programme Olympia Limited, 6 June 1896 (held in the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum, University of Exeter).

²² *New York Times*, 16 January 1898, part 2, p.3.

²³ Richard Brown, ‘England’s First Cinema’, *The British Journal of Photography*, 24 June 1977, 520-521 and 530-531.

18 June also includes the Vivaceographe as part of the line-up²⁴ and advertisements in *The Daily Chronicle* and *The Standard* were still listing the Vivaceographe at Olympia as late as Tuesday 30 June²⁵ and Wednesday 1 July.²⁶ Curiously, from Monday 29 June Banks was exhibiting the Vivaceographe in Folkestone, around ninety miles from London, which suggests that his spell at Olympia had finished by then.²⁷ The continuation of the advert in *The Daily Chronicle* may simply have been an oversight or it may illustrate how a venue showing a multitude of entertainments might advertise a specific cinematograph as shorthand for animated pictures more generally. In either case, it highlights how newspaper advertisements and reviews should be treated with caution, particularly for venues where the entertainments on offer altered frequently.

If Banks was in the enviable position of having secured an engagement at Olympia, what prompted him to make the switch from this prestigious London venue to a theatre in Folkestone? It is likely that Banks had arranged the Folkestone performance months in advance, prior to securing Olympia, particularly as Banks advertised in early April for engagements for his dioramic entertainment and concert party.²⁸ In addition, it was usual practice for Banks to take his concert party on an annual tour, visiting a number of places for limited periods of time. A short, two-week exhibition at Olympia was therefore consistent with his usual practice, as well as being consistent with a venue which liked to provide variety and a regular change of amusements on offer for patrons.

The Vivaceographe and the tourist trade

Banks exhibited at the Folkestone Pleasure Gardens Theatre for six nights from Monday 29 June 1896. The theatres and places of amusement in Folkestone aimed to attract audiences from the visiting tourist trade as well as from the locality. Indeed, *The Folkestone Herald* commented that:

On the boards of the Pleasure Gardens this season we shall have several of the best gems of the London theatres, pieces that have drawn enthusiastic houses at the Haymarket, the Criterion, the Avenue, the Lyric, the Gaiety, the Prince of Wales, the Duke of York's, Daly's, and the Savoy. The most fastidious playgoer must admit that this is a bold enterprise on the part of a provincial

²⁴ Official Programme Olympia Limited, 18 June 1896. Programme is held in the British Film Institute Special Collections.

²⁵ *Daily Chronicle*, 30 June 1896, p. 6.

²⁶ *Standard*, 1 July 1896, p. 6.

²⁷ *FH*, 27 June 1896, p. 8.

²⁸ *Era*, 4 April 1896, p. 24.

manager [...] chronic dullness is fatal to the prosperity of a fashionable seaside resort, and we cannot expect visitors unless we provide as far as possible for their amusement and enjoyment.²⁹

It seems that this bold enterprise extended to exhibiting the Vivaceographe, as in the same edition this preview appeared:

Mr Rowland is breaking comparatively new ground, having arranged with Mr. Horace G. Banks to produce his series of dioramic Tours at the Pleasure Gardens Theatre every evening next week. [...] The marvel of the age – the Vivaceographe – will also be introduced. Animated Photographs. Does all but speak. Photographs taken by Rontgen X Rays projected on the screen.³⁰

This is a rather curious preview as the last section reads like promotional or marketing expressions, which suggests that the newspaper received advertising copy in advance from Banks and Greaves or the Pleasure Gardens Theatre. X-ray photographs projected on screen are also mentioned and it is feasible that Banks had the ability to display x-ray photographs as *The Optical Magic Lantern Journal* commented in February 1896 that ‘it is interesting to know that Messrs. Newton & Co., of Fleet street [*sic*], have just placed on the market a number of lantern slides showing photographs taken under the above conditions [x-rays]’.³¹

The Folkestone Programme provided a weekly record of events and general information for visitors and residents. A preview published on the first day of Banks’ spell in Folkestone indicates that his form of entertainment was a change from the recent norm:

The programme at the Pleasure Gardens Theatre this week will be of an entirely different nature, for Mr. Rowland has made arrangements for a visit of Mr. H. G. Banks’ Popular Dioramic Tours, which gave so much pleasure to large audiences at the Victoria Pier last year. [...] The ‘animated photographs’ is an important feature of the entertainment, and during their exhibition in London were the means of attracting large attendances. We have no doubt

²⁹ *FH*, 27 June 1896, p. 3.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 6.

³¹ *OMLJ*, 7.81 (February 1896), p. 20.

there will be large audiences of Folkestone people and the visitors who are at present in the town.³²

The entertainment was a combination of dioramic tours and animated pictures. The so-called 'tours' used slides reproduced from photographs shown by means of a lantern, in unison with lecturing from Banks. There would have been particular emphasis on illumination and movement, with the images on screen appearing almost life-like. There was clearly an international flavour to the experience as Banks lectured on a 'Voyage to America' and 'Trip to New Zealand', along with a more local tour of the Channel Islands and so the lantern slide entertainment provided by Banks was effectively a travelogue or photographic tour.

Banks had travelled widely as a young man, reportedly leaving London at the tender age of thirteen, and voyaging to Australia, China, Japan and India. He also claimed to have become an officer in the Australian Steam Ship Navigation Company, and a Lieutenant in the Australian Naval Reserve, where he gained an 'intimate knowledge of Australia, New Zealand and Tasmania'.³³ His death certificate grandly recorded his occupation as 'retired naval captain',³⁴ which is somewhat misleading considering that other records show he was a commercial traveller (a travelling salesman) for most of his career³⁵ and his sea-faring days were over by the time he was twenty-one.³⁶ At the time of Horace's birth in 1858, his father Samuel Thomas Banks was also recorded as a 'Commercial agent',³⁷ yet he too was later described as a 'Sea Captain'³⁸ in an official document (perhaps a method of promotion on Horace's part). Despite these occupational embellishments, it is not surprising that Banks' dioramic tours utilised such international views, perhaps seen first-hand and probably employing some of his own photographs of the Channel Isles. There is, however, doubt as to whether he visited New Zealand in person as in 1895 it was reported in the Christchurch newspaper *The Star* that 'Mr Banks has

³² *Folkestone Programme and Weekly Review*, 29 June 1896, p. 5.

³³ 'Prominent Men', *OMLJ*, pp. 88-89.

³⁴ 'Horace George Banks', *Certified Copy of Death Certificate for Horace George Banks, 17 January 1946* (Application Number 1803809: Lewisham Register Office, 1946).

³⁵ See, for example, 'Horace George Banks', *Certified Copy of Marriage Certificate for Horace George Banks and Frances Georgina Morris, 14 March 1908* (Application Number 1819722: Lewisham Register Office, 1908), and the 1881 census which can be accessed at The National Archives in Kew or at the Family Records Centre in Islington or online: 'Genealogy, Family Trees & Family History Records at Ancestry.co.uk', *Ancestry.co.uk*, 2015 <<http://www.ancestry.co.uk>> [accessed 23 September 2015].

³⁶ 'Prominent Men', *OMLJ*, pp. 88-89.

³⁷ 'Horace George Banks', *Certified Copy of Birth Certificate for Horace George Banks, 31 July 1858* (Application Number 1803926: Stepney Register Office, 1858).

³⁸ 'Horace George Banks', *Certified Copy of Marriage Certificate for Horace George Banks and Frances Georgina Morris, 14 March 1908* (Application Number 1819722: Lewisham Register Office, 1908).

never seen New Zealand, but out of the information supplied him by the Agent-General, has contrived a very interesting lecture'.³⁹

Coupled with 'over 100 magnificent views', the entertainment in Folkestone also included illustrated songs and ballads by Miss Carlotta Lynne, Mr. Richard Evans and Mr. Percy G. Young.⁴⁰ This small troupe of artistes frequently toured with Banks and formed a key part of the concert party. It was noted in *The Optical Magic Lantern Journal* that Banks 'holds prominent positions in the Masonic world'⁴¹ and there appears to have been a Masonic connection with Banks and one of his performers. In September 1895 Banks gave an entertainment at the Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution in Croydon, which included his lecture 'From England to America', as well as songs by his wife and Bro. Richard Evans.⁴² Although Evans was a fellow Brother, research shows that Greaves was not a Mason although he also took part in the entertainment: 'Whilst [Banks] had been at work on the platform there had been an assistant silently at work at the other end of the room manipulating the lantern – Mr. Leonard Greaves'.⁴³

At the Pleasure Gardens Theatre, Banks showcased his entertainment nightly at 8pm, with matinees on Wednesday and Saturday at 3pm. There was no mention of X-ray photographs in subsequent reviews but the animated photographs apparently caused 'considerable amusement to those present'.⁴⁴ Another commentator advised that:

all should make a point of seeing that wonderful invention called the 'Vivaceographe' which presents with unerring accuracy animated pictures of every day life, such as skirt dancers, bootblacks, fencers, etc., the movements of which are strikingly life-like. The effect obtained must be seen to be believed.⁴⁵

Interestingly, the advice here sounds more like an advertisement than a genuine review, and this is borne out by the reality of the exhibition which did not live up to the hype on this occasion:

When the Lecturer and Guide informed the audience that the Vivaceographe which he was about the exhibit was originally at Olympia great expectations were aroused, but alas were not fulfilled. The animated pictures were blurred

³⁹ (New Zealand) *Star*, 19 April 1895, p. 2. Courtesy of the National Library of New Zealand.

⁴⁰ *FH*, 27 June 1896, p. 6.

⁴¹ 'Prominent Men', *OMLJ*, p. 89.

⁴² *Freemason*, 5 October 1895, 34.1387, p. 547.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *FP*, 6 July 1896, p. 5.

⁴⁵ *FH*, 4 July 1896, p. 9.

and indistinct, which is much to be regretted, as the majority of the audience had been attracted by the announcement that this 'wonder of the age' was to be seen for the first time in Folkestone.⁴⁶

The Folkestone Herald also commented that 'although they are most interesting entertainments, they have failed to draw large audiences'.⁴⁷ Attendance at such events seems to have been a general problem in Folkestone during the summer season of 1896 and Banks' dioramic tours and concert party did not escape this. *The Folkestone Programme* noted the following week that 'the lessee of the Town Hall evidently does not seem disheartened by the smallness of the houses during the last few days, his attractions for the next week being as strong as ever, and honestly deserve to be most liberally supported'.⁴⁸ One of these attractions was the illustrious magician from the Egyptian Hall in London, Mr. David Devant, also presenting a series of animated photographs. Even the celebrated David Devant could not boost attendance and audience numbers were lower than expected for his entertainment:

For the first three days of the present week, Mr. David Devant and Mr. Mel. B. Spur were responsible for the entertainments [...] and although the audiences were an improvement on the previous week, they were not nearly so large as the excellent entertainers thoroughly deserved. It is extremely disappointing to the lessee that he should week by week bring down the finest London talent, and lose considerably thereby. The high class attractions that have already been presented, and those also that are to follow will compare favourably with any town in England, and it is only right to expect that a fair share of public support should be accorded the management.⁴⁹

The review goes on to describe the animated photographs exhibited by Devant, claiming that:

nothing finer than these have ever been seen in the town. These alone should have filled the hall nightly. The photographs shewn were Blackfriar's Bridge, serpentine dance, engineer's workshops, the Paris express entering Calais station, and many others. The effects obtained were such as almost to lead one

⁴⁶ *Folkestone Up To Date*, 4 July 1896, p. 6.

⁴⁷ *FH*, 4 July 1896, p. 9.

⁴⁸ *FH*, 11 July 1896, p. 9.

⁴⁹ *FH*, 18 July 1896, p. 9.

to believe that the figures were real flesh and blood so realistic was every movement.⁵⁰

This review shines further light on the Vivaceographe exhibition in Folkestone the previous month. The fact that ‘nothing finer’ had been seen in the town suggests that Devant’s animated photographs were superior to those shown by Banks. *The Folkestone Herald*’s limited description of the Vivaceographe programme (‘skirt dancers, bootblacks, fencers, etc.,’) was far more generic in comparison to the easily identifiable Paul films listed under Devant’s review. Further, assuming the same reviewer saw both programmes, there is no indication that any of the films shown by Devant were shown previously by Banks. This gives credence to the notion that Banks was not showing a programme of films made predominantly by Robert Paul.

The Biarritz of Wales

Towards the latter part of July 1896 Banks continued his tour west to another tourist resort, travelling to Aberystwyth in Wales. The Royal Pier Pavilion played host to Banks’ programme of dioramic tours, songs, ballads and animated pictures from Monday 20 July until Saturday 25 July. Although the pier itself dated from 1865, the pavilion was erected in 1895 and was formally opened on 26 June 1896 by the Prince and Princess of Wales, which explains the references to both the ‘New’ and ‘Royal’ Pier Pavilion in advertisements. Barnes says that one of the earliest recorded instances of films being shown on a seaside pier was by ‘Lieutenant’ Walter Cole in Worthing on 31 August 1896.⁵¹ Certainly he was the first to show animated pictures in West Sussex,⁵² however Banks’ performance in Aberystwyth predates that exhibition by more than a month. Banks was therefore possibly the first exhibitor to show animated pictures on a seaside pier nationwide. Banks was fortunate to have secured a week-long engagement in Aberystwyth so soon after the Royal opening of the pavilion, when there would still have been plenty of curiosity about the new venue. Capable of seating up to 2000 people, and one of the few places of indoor entertainment in the town, an interior shot of the pavilion (**Fig. 6.6**) helps one to appreciate the scale of the venue and how the space may have been arranged when Banks was there.

⁵⁰ *FH*, 18 July 1896, p. 9.

⁵¹ Barnes, *vol. I*, p. 146.

⁵² Allen Eyles, Frank Gray and A. E. Readman, *Cinema West Sussex: The First Hundred Years* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1996), p. 207.



Fig. 6.6. Interior of the Aberystwyth Pier Pavilion, date unknown.
 ‘Ceredigion County Council-The Interior Of The Pier Pavilion’, *Ceredigion.gov.uk*, 2015
 <<https://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=5678>> [accessed 25 September 2015]

In advance of Banks’ engagement, an advertisement in *The Aberystwyth Observer* declared: ‘Next week, greatest wonder of the age, Rontgen X Rays and the Vivaceograph’.⁵³ Interestingly, the typeface used for ‘Rontgen X Rays’ was bigger and bolder than the typeface used for ‘Vivaceograph’. In addition, the shared use of the word ‘greatest’ for both media implies that X-Rays and animated pictures have a commonality - that the real wonder is viewing images in a new way, whether through X-Ray photography or moving pictures. On the other hand, an advertisement in *The Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers’ Gazette* does not refer to X-Rays but describes the Vivaceograph as ‘the Latest Wonder of the 19th Century’.⁵⁴ Once the programme was underway the wording and focus of the publicity in *The Aberystwyth Observer* shifted towards animated pictures: ‘last three nights of the animated pictures. The vivaceograph. Electric wonder and scientific marvel of the age’.⁵⁵ A review from the same edition provides basic information concerning the entertainment, and does not appraise or describe the films specifically. It does, however, emphasise how the ‘views were [...] thrown on screen by the new invention the Vivaceographe, which, like the Kinetoscope, shows a series of continuous movements’.⁵⁶

⁵³ *Aberystwyth Observer*, 16 July 1896, p. 2.

⁵⁴ *Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers’ Gazette*, 17 July 1896, p.5.

⁵⁵ *AO*, 23 July 1896, p. 2.

⁵⁶ *AO*, 23 July 1896, p. 2.

Banks himself was the lecturer and verbally guided the audience through his dioramic tours, whilst Mr. C. W. Locke operated the dioramic effects.⁵⁷ Locke was clearly an accomplished lanternist as he went on to manage the Theatrograph projection during David Devant's tour of Scotland later in the year.⁵⁸ It seems that the programme in Aberystwyth incorporated various aural elements, including lecturing, music and song. A review in *The Era* shows that the vocal artists were an integral part of the dioramic tours as slides were 'interspersed by songs and duets descriptive of the views'.⁵⁹ Unfortunately the review does not indicate if the performers also sang alongside the animated pictures, but a preoccupation with movement and action is highlighted once more: 'the electric photographic marvel, the Vivaceograph, is set in motion, by means of which several scenes of everyday life and action are thrown on screen'.⁶⁰ Two separate reviews support the fact that the animated pictures were presented at the end of the programme on this occasion.⁶¹

A repeat performance?

The following month it appears that Banks returned to Olympia for the Bank Holiday on Monday 3 August. Two London newspapers made specific references to the Vivaceographe in their reviews of the holiday programme at Olympia, with *The Morning Post* reporting that:

A number of side shows in various parts of the building provided additional attractions, which were well patronised, especially the vivaceographe, one of the latest methods of representing realistic moving pictures from real life.⁶²

According to this newspaper, the holiday programme was due to continue during the week, so it is possible that Banks was present at Olympia for several days. *The Standard* also listed various entertainments that comprised the Bank Holiday programme, and referred to the Vivaceographe in passing.⁶³ Without further unequivocal evidence of Banks himself being present at Olympia, we must treat these sources with caution. We have already seen that Olympia was apt to continue advertising the Vivaceographe when Banks was exhibiting elsewhere, so the amusement venue may simply have used the term 'Vivaceographe' to refer generically to animated pictures.

⁵⁷ *Era*, 25 July 1896, p. 17.

⁵⁸ Barnes, *vol. I*, p. 136.

⁵⁹ *Era*, 25 July 1896, p. 17.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Cambrian News*, 24 July 1896, p. 8 and *Era*, 25 July 1896, p. 17.

⁶² *Morning Post*, 4 August 1896, p. 2.

⁶³ *Standard*, 4 August 1896, p. 6.

Southend-on-Sea

Banks took his concert party to the Essex seaside resort of Southend-on-Sea in August. We can surmise from a report in *The Era* that his engagement was running at the Pier Pavilion for the week of 17 August.⁶⁴ Mr Locke was once more at the helm of the dioramic effects, there were songs and ballads, and animated pictures were shown in addition to the dioramic tour 'England to America'. As with the Aberystwyth engagement, this pre-dates Walter Cole's Worthing Pier engagement. It is currently not known which films Banks showed in Southend, or how they were received.

'For Health, Pleasure and Brightest Weather'⁶⁵

Towards the end of August 1896, Banks was exhibiting the Vivaceographe in Jersey, with 'Banks and Party' arriving on the island on the express steamship *Stella* from Southampton.⁶⁶ The West Park Pavilion in St. Helier, Jersey, played host to the Vivaceographe from Tuesday 25 August until Saturday 29 August 1896.

By permission of Sir G. Bertram, Bailiff.

**JERSEY COMMERCIAL
ASSOCIATION.**

West Park Pavilion.

H. G. BANKS'

**POPULAR DIORAMIC TOURS,
ENGLAND TO AMERICA**

AND

PICTURESQUE NEW ZEALAND,

ON

*Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday,
Friday and Saturday,*

Aug. 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th and 29th, 1896,
and

**Two Matinees on Wednesday and
Saturday,**

August 26th and 29th, 1896.

The following artistes will sing :—Miss
CARLOTTA LYNN, Miss MARIE VILLIERS,
Mr. RICHARD EVANS, Mr. PERCY G. YOUNG.

The Sensation of the Age. Messrs. BANKS
and GREAVES'

VIVACEOGRAPHE

Animated Photograph. The Electric Photo-
graphic Marvel of the day. Does all but
speak. As shewn by them at Olympia,
London, with tremendous success. Photo-
graphs taken by the Rontgen X Rays pro-
jected on the screen.

Concluding with a **GRAND DISPLAY** of
STATUARY and DIORAMIC EFFECTS.

Admission :—Reserved seats, 2s.; second
seats, 1s.; back seats and promenade, 6d.

Doors open 7.30. Commence 8 p.m. Doors
open matinees 2.30. Commence 3 p.m.

3664) A. W. BELLIS, Secretary.

Fig. 6.7 Advertisement, Jersey Commercial Association, *Jersey Express*, 22 August 1896, p. 3.

⁶⁴ *Era*, 22 August 1896, p. 19.

⁶⁵ *A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to London* (London: Ward, Lock & Co., Ltd, 1904). Advertisement for Jersey placed by the Jersey Commercial Association, p. 26.

⁶⁶ *Jersey Times and British Press*, 25 August 1896, p. 3.

Although the Channel Islands may appear a rather remote location for the London-based Banks, it was apparently a popular destination for lantern lecturers as it was reported in *The Optical Magic Lantern Journal* that ‘certain of our leading exhibitors find the Channel Isles a good place wherein to give a series of exhibitions each year’.⁶⁷ Additionally, Banks was not a stranger to the Channel Islands as it was fittingly during a vacation there that he first became interested in photography: ‘When spending a holiday one year in Jersey, some of his companions had their cameras with them, and [Banks] caught the photographic fever very badly, and for some time this remained his sole hobby’.⁶⁸

Due to the distance from London and the fact it was the first time animated pictures had been seen on the island, the Jersey press may have been witnessing animated photographs for the first time, along with local residents and holiday visitors. This may explain why the reviews were so detailed. The *Jersey Express* reveals the fascination with the movement and animation of the films, as well as highlighting an issue with the projection:

This is a marvellous development of the photographic art, the figures appearing to move in a lifelike manner. A street scene for instance shewed the ordinary traffic in full motion. Pedestrians were crossing the road, ‘busses and other vehicles were passing along, and the whole picture was so naturally preserved and animated that the illusion was perfect. A skirt dancer too went through all the motions of her graceful performance, and those who had not seen this new development of philography⁶⁹ before were simply astounded. The pictures did not come out so clearly as when they were shewn in London, and Mr. Banks explained this by saying that there they had the electric light, and the more powerful the light, the better the result.’⁷⁰

The entertainment was even recorded in *The Star*, a Guernsey newspaper. It was a glowing review from which further information can be gleaned concerning the anticipation of the audience as well as the projection issue:

⁶⁷ *OMLJ*, 6.77 (October 1896), p.150.

⁶⁸ *OMLJ*, 9.109 (June 1898), p. 89.

⁶⁹ Philography is a curious word to use as it refers to the practice of collecting autographs, usually a signed document or photograph. Perhaps the reviewer alludes to this idea as animated photography could be viewed as a method of collecting images. Alternatively this may simply be a typographical error for ‘photography’.

⁷⁰ *JEA*, 26 August 1896, p. 2.

The Vivaceographe was a feature of the entertainment which had been anticipated with feelings of mingled curiosity and interest. [...] those shown on Wednesday evening including street scenes and a girl performing a skirt dance. The last-mentioned was the most satisfactory, the serpentine motions of the dress being depicted with really marvellous accuracy. Electric light not being available for the purpose, limelight had to be used, and this circumstance, as Mr. Banks had previously explained, naturally prevented the pictures from being seen with the same distinctness as if the more powerful illuminant had been requisitioned.⁷¹

Once more, Locke was operating the dioramic effects for Banks, as he also did in Aberystwyth and Southend-on-Sea, which suggests that Greaves was not present. The *Jersey Times* chose to focus more on the dioramic tours as well as detailing a sales pitch about emigration to New Zealand.⁷²

The entertainment, which was well attended, was varied by vocal selections, these being among the most enjoyable items in the programme. [...] The entertainment concluded with a display of animated pictures, representing with marvellous fidelity and accuracy scenes of everyday life and a display of statuary and dioramic effects by Mr. C. W. Locke, which was indeed worth seeing. [...] During one of the intervals Mr. Wm. Courtney, of the Colonization and Farmer's Bureau, 53, New Oxford Street, London, by permission addressed a few words to those present, and besides vouching for the accuracy of the pictures, dilated on the advantages for New Zealand as a field for small capitalists and others.⁷³

Courtney also resourcefully alluded to Banks' programme in his own newspaper advertisement by stating that 'anyone thinking of New Zealand should attend Mr Banks' splendidly Illustrated Lecture on New Zealand at the West Park Pavilion'.⁷⁴ This is the only reference to Mr. Courtney I have uncovered in connection with Banks or the Vivaceographe, so it is likely he had a connection with the Jersey Commercial Association.

⁷¹ (Guernsey) *Star*, 29 August 1896, p. 2.

⁷² For more detailed information on the connection between lantern slides and emigration, see Damer Waddington, *Panoramas, Magic Lanterns, Cinemas: A Century of "Light" Entertainment in Jersey 1814-1914* (Jersey: Tocan Books, 2003).

⁷³ *JT*, 26 August, 1896, p. 2.

⁷⁴ *JT*, 25 August 1896, p. 3.

It was fortuitous for both men that Banks was giving a lecture about New Zealand whilst Courtney was in Jersey to provide information to interested parties about emigration.

Guernsey

Two days after the final performance in Jersey, Banks was exhibiting the Vivaceographe in nearby Guernsey. The Directors of the Guille-Allès Library in St. Peter Port arranged for Horace Banks to exhibit in St. Julian's Hall over the August Bank Holiday, on Monday 31 August and Tuesday 1 September 1896. The hall served as the local theatre and assembly room.



Fig. 6.8 St. Julian's Hall, St. Peter Port. Courtesy of the Priaulx Library, Guernsey.

It would have been a relatively straightforward trip from Jersey to Guernsey aboard one of the regular steamers which ran between the islands, such as the *Frederica*, which is

pictured (**Fig. 6.9**), loading passengers and produce at St. Peter Port, Guernsey.⁷⁵

Coincidentally, as part of his display in Guernsey, Banks exhibited a slide of the *Frederica* entering St. Peter Port, as described in the French newspaper *La Gazette*:

M. Banks, ayant fait voyager ses auditeurs en pays étrangers et flatté leur curiosité les a ramené à Guernesey leur exhibant le steamer *Frederica* entrant dans le havre de St-Pierre-Port.⁷⁶

This indicates that Banks also included a local dioramic tour of the Channel Islands, like the one he showed in Folkestone.



Fig. 6.9 *The Frederica* at St. Peter Port, Guernsey c. 1890s.
Courtesy of The Guernsey Museum & Art Gallery

The local newspapers in Guernsey emphasised the scientific aspect of the Vivaceographe and the success of animated pictures in England. Thus *The Guernsey Times* reported that Banks would be introducing:

for the first time in Guernsey the new scientific marvel known as the Vivaceograph, or Animated Pictures. This remarkable development of the photographic art – by which figures thrown upon the screen go through the

⁷⁵ Information kindly supplied by Matt Harvey at The Guernsey Museum & Art Gallery from local research he conducted for his article 'The Railway Companies, Steam Packets and Tourism' (unpublished).

⁷⁶ 'Mr Banks, having taken his audience on a voyage of foreign countries and flattered their curiosity, took them to Guernsey to show them the steamer *Frederica* entering St. Peter Port', (my translation). *La Gazette*, 5 September 1896, p. 2.

actions of life – is just now attracting great attention in England, and will no doubt be equally popular here.⁷⁷

The *Guernsey Advertiser* adopted a similar line: ‘Messrs. Banks and Greaves will present the latest scientific marvel of the day, consisting of animated pictures, showing all the actions of life, and one of the present London successes’.⁷⁸ The similarity of the two sets of comments again raises questions about whether newspapers were provided with advertising copy from the venue or Banks.

The programme included films of three Japanese girls performing a fan and shawl dance, a blacksmith’s forge with men at work, a bathing scene, a skirt dance and a train arriving at a station.⁷⁹ Although Banks was only performing in Guernsey for two nights, the Guernsey newspaper reviews of the animated pictures are far more detailed than reviews concerning his engagements elsewhere in this period. They indicate the films shown in Guernsey, and it is conceivable that the film programme would not have altered significantly within the space of a few months, suggesting that these films were shown during Banks’ exhibitions throughout the summer and autumn of 1896. Banks would certainly have shown these films in Jersey the previous week, at the very least.

The *Guernsey Advertiser* described how crowded audiences were attracted to the St. Julian’s Hall by the announcement that living pictures or vivaceographes would be shown. After describing several of the films, the commentator remarked that ‘had the electric light been available, the sharpness of the vivaceographes would have been more striking’.⁸⁰ *The Star* provided an exceptionally detailed review, which really give us a flavour of the films that were shown and the audience response, and is therefore worth reproducing in detail:

At about the middle of the evening, the principal attraction of the entertainment, the vivaceographe, was got into order for working. The first of the living photographs shewed three Japanese ladies indulging in a pretty fan and shawl dance. At first the audience was spell-bound with astonishment, such a marvellous sight never having been seen by the largest portion of them. Gradually, however, they were moved to excitement, the clever dance ending amid loud applause. A blacksmith’s shop was next seen, with the men at work. The next scene was that of a beach in summer time, crowded with children

⁷⁷ *Guernsey Times*, 29 August 1896, p. 2.

⁷⁸ *Guernsey Advertiser and Weekly Chronicle*, 29 August 1896, p. 2.

⁷⁹ *GAWC*, 5 September 1896, p. 2.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

paddling in the sea. The effect of the waves breaking on the shore was marvellous; one could almost fancy hearing them roar as they broke upon the shore. It was also very amusing to watch the children retiring in haste before an unusually high wave. The action of one child snatching up some of its clothes from the beach to save them from getting wet caused much laughter. Probably the view which caused the greatest enthusiasm was the arrival of a train at a station. The train was first seen at a distance. Gradually it came nearer, increasing in size as it did so, till finally it pulled up alongside the platform, which in an instant was filled by a crowd of persons exiting from the carriages; others hurrying to get in so as not to lose their train. This marvellous scene fairly brought down the house, the audience evidently being fain to see the view again. The last view was that of a lady going through a skirt dance. Had a living person been dancing she could not have excelled the correct manner in which the graceful dancer was represented upon the screen. This concluded the series of views by the vivaceograph which undoubtedly caused a new sensation last evening at St. Julian's Hall.⁸¹

This review is important for a number of reasons. First, the account shows that the Vivaceographe was now being exhibited in the middle of the programme, rather than at the end of the programme as in Aberystwyth or Jersey, for example. Another local newspaper also confirms this by stating that 'one of the chief features of the entertainment [living pictures] was introduced half way down the programme'.⁸² Second, the review also emphasises the films rather than the apparatus or technology of moving pictures, and the films clearly made a lasting impression on this reviewer despite any issues with the sharpness of the images (which he did not even comment upon). The review may have been positive in order to encourage continued attendance on the final day of Banks' engagement, but the reviewer did seem genuinely enthralled by the films, and this feeling was perhaps intensified by the fact that many in the audience had witnessed animated pictures for the first time. Third, the description of the audience reaction to the train film is also enlightening. There is no indication of panic or fear, only a desire to view the film again to enjoy the pleasure of watching the movement of the train and passengers. This is in contrast to the conventional portrayal of audience reactions to similar train films which has been coined the 'train effect' and which film historian Stephen Bottomore summarises thus:

⁸¹ (Guernsey) *Star*, 1 September 1896, p. 2.

⁸² *GAWC*, 5 September 1896, p. 2.

In the ‘folklore’ of cinema history there is one anecdote which seems to be perennially fascinating to layman and historian alike. It might be summarised as follows: an audience in the early days of the cinema is seated in a hall when a film of an approaching train is projected on the screen. The spectators are anxious, fearful – some of them even panic and run.⁸³

An accident at the Gare Montparnasse in Paris, less than six months before Lumière and Paul exhibited their train films, provides an insight into the reality of such fear. *The Pall Mall Gazette* described the accident in detail:

All the world knows the vast semicircle of glass which looks down upon the Rue de Rennes from Gare Montparnasse [...] Not many hours since a train coming from Granville dashed through this window, and is now suspended, as on a gigantic string, over the roadway. The spectacle is unwonted and amazing [...] There hangs, in the face of the world, the great, unwieldy train, which breaking down its poor obstruction of glass, fell into the street, overturned an omnibus, and crushed to death a hawker of newspapers. [...] The accident is conspicuous, and it is not surprising that all Paris is hastening to see the sight. [...] The cafés of the neighbourhood are packed with the curious [...] the stone parapet is torn like paper, the road is strewn with broken glass, and a portion of the train dangles like a strange mask over the street.⁸⁴

Photographs taken in the aftermath of the accident have subsequently become iconic images in transportation history (**Fig. 6.10**), but for people at the time such widely-published images provided irrefutable proof that a train could break through a building, so why should a flimsy and temporary screen be immune. Film historian Martin Lopierdinger has described the myth of panicked reactions amongst audiences towards Lumière’s *L’arrivée d’un train* as a ‘panic legend’⁸⁵ and he is firm in his view that ‘mainstream film historiography has provided neither evidence nor even references to contemporary sources. Film historians repeat without examination the claim that, viewing the locomotive approaching the camera, spectators at the time mistook the images on the screen for

⁸³ Stephen Bottomore, ‘The Panicking Audience?: early cinema and the ‘train effect’, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 19.2 (1999), 177-216 (p. 177).

⁸⁴ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 23 October 1895, p. 7.

⁸⁵ Martin Loiperdinger, ‘Lumière’s Arrival of the Train: Cinema’s Founding Myth’, *The Moving Image*, 4.1 (2004), 89-118 (p. 96).

reality'.⁸⁶ Having looked at primary evidence, Bottomore similarly believes that 'in general as far as train arrival films are concerned, a more typical reaction than panic or fear was sheer enthusiasm'.⁸⁷ The response of the audience in Guernsey, according to the review in *The Star*, clearly validates this view.

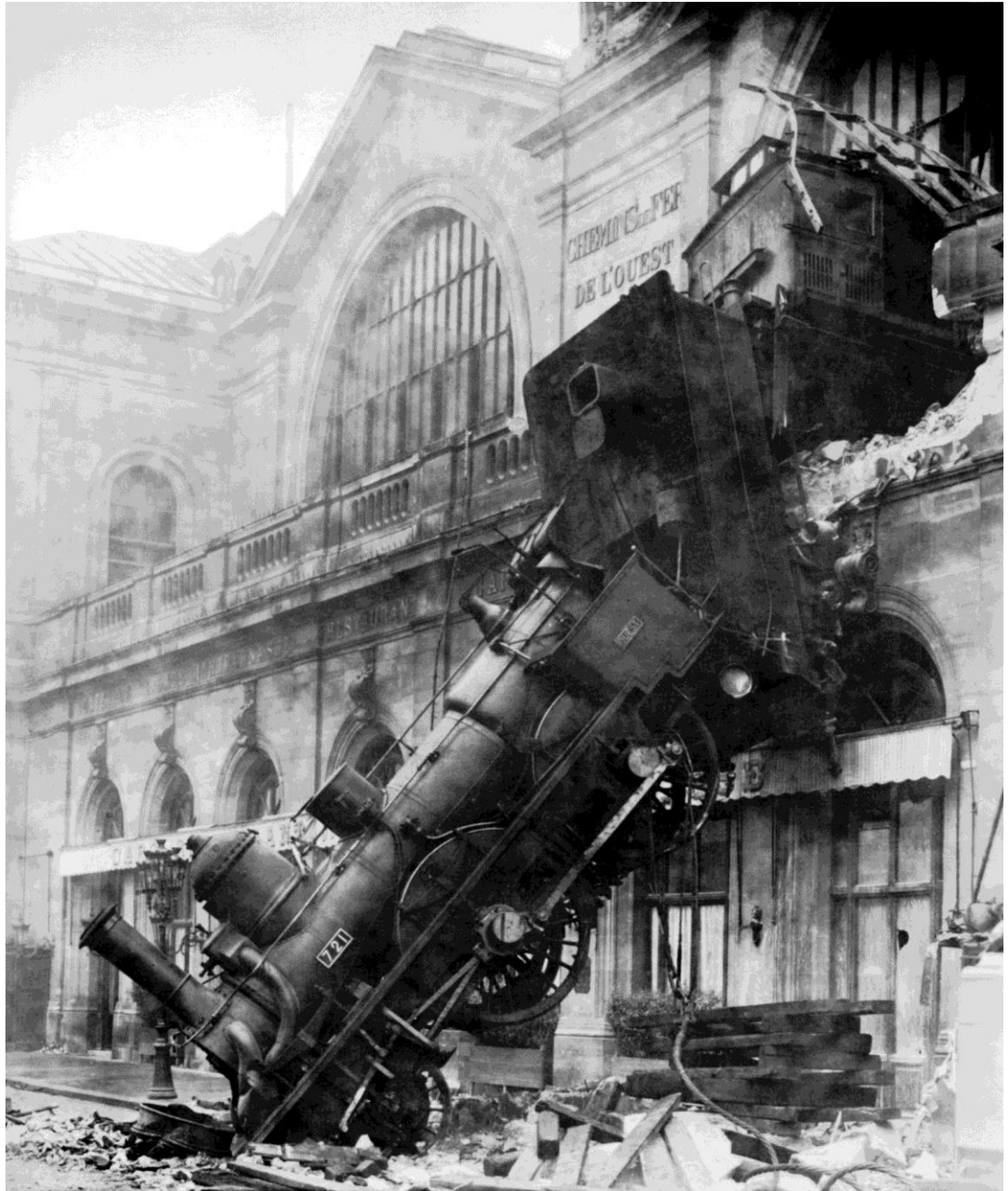


Fig. 6.10. Train wreck at Montparnasse, October 1895.

'Train Wreck At Montparnasse 1895.Jpg', *Wikipedia*

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Train_wreck_at_Montparnasse_1895.jpg> [accessed 23 September 2015]

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 91.

⁸⁷ Stephen Bottomore, 'The Panicking Audience?', p. 181.

The Isle of Wight

A fashionable holiday destination for Victorian writers, poets and artists, and a summer retreat for Queen Victoria, Banks' next destination was the temperate Isle of Wight. He travelled direct from Guernsey to exhibit animated pictures at Ventnor Pavilion from 3 September. His programme ran for three nights and the following year a newspaper report mentioned that 'Mr. Banks was the first to introduce animated pictures into Ventnor'.⁸⁸ Once again we see an advertisement referring to X-ray views in addition to the Vivaceographe,⁸⁹ yet a subsequent review does not confirm whether X-ray photographs were actually shown. The reviewer does, however, describe the popularity of Banks' entertainment, describing it as 'the best of the kind we have seen anywhere [...] It is very rare to hear such enthusiasm at an entertainment at Ventnor as was evoked by Mr. Banks and those who assisted him'.⁹⁰ Unfortunately the reviewer did not go into further detail, so there is no indication of the types of films that were shown or the audience reaction to them.

Banks subsequently travelled up the coast of the island to the seaside resort of Sandown, where he occupied the Pier Pavilion from Monday 7 to Wednesday 9 September. The mixed programme of dioramic views, songs and animated pictures again proved a successful draw:

This is one of the best and most interesting entertainments the management have brought us, the views being much superior to anything we have previously seen in this class of entertainment, while the animated photographs caused both astonishment and amusement.⁹¹

Despite having a matinee and evening performance each day, the animated pictures were only shown at the evening performances, suggesting that the venue was not suitable for showing animated pictures during daylight hours.⁹²

The seaside town of Ryde on the north-east coast of the island was Banks' next point of call. With a similar arrangement to Sandown, Banks was engaged at the Ryde Pier Pavilion from Thursday 10 to Saturday 12 September, performing matinees and featuring animated pictures at the evening sessions only. The format of an advertisement in *The Isle*

⁸⁸ *Isle of Wight Mercury*, 11 September, 1897, p. 5.

⁸⁹ *IWM*, 29 August 1896, p. 4.

⁹⁰ *IWM*, 12 September 1896, p. 5.

⁹¹ *Isle of Wight Chronicle*, 10 September 1896, p. 5.

⁹² *IWC*, 3 September 1896, p. 4.

of *Wight Observer* (Fig. 6.11) implies that the animated pictures included ‘Ryde Pier Day and Night’.⁹³

PIER PAVILION, RYDE
 Lessees, Messrs. Bannister Howard & Eric Scott.
 Proprietors .. The Ryde Pier Company.

LAST WEEK OF THE SEASON!

**MONDAY NEXT, SEPTEMBER 7TH,
 GRAND**

FANCY DRESS BALL
 A Prize will be given for the Best Dress.
 Double Tickets, 7s. 6d.; Single Tickets, 5s.; to
 View the Ball, 1s.
 In answer to numerous enquiries, Masks and
 Dominos may be worn.

**TUESDAY, September 8th—Last Night of
 THE ROYAL MARINE LIGHT
 INFANTRY BAND.**
 (which will be personally conducted by Mr
 Miller).
 Selections from Popular Operas. Grand
 Popular Night.
 Admission, 6d.; Tip-up Chairs, 1s.

**WEDNESDAY, September 9th, at 3.30
 and 8.30,—The**

ROYAL PIERROT BANJO TEAM.

**THURSDAY, FRIDAY, and SATURDAY,
 September 10th, 11th, 12th (each Day at 3.30;
 each Evening at 8), Horace Banks'**

GRAND DIORAMA,
 "ENGLAND TO AMERICA."
 (100 Splendid Views).
 Also, at the Evening Performance only,
ANIMATED PICTURES,
 Which will include Ryde Pier Day and Night.

**Prices—Tip-up Chairs, 2s.; Body of Hall, 1s;
 Promenade and Gallery, 6d. 2s. and 1s. Tickets
 include Pier Toll and Electric Car each way.
 6d. Tickets include Pier Toll only. Cycles
 stored free of charge during the performance.**

Fig. 6.11 Advertisement, Ryde Pier Pavilion, *IWO*, 5 September 1896, p. 8.

The *Isle of Wight County Press* also advertised the entertainment in such a manner to suggest that animated pictures of Ryde would be shown:

Also, at the Evening Performances only,

ANIMATED PICTURES

Which will include “RYDE PIER, DAY AND NIGHT”⁹⁴

⁹³ *Isle of Wight Observer*, 5 September 1896, p. 8.

⁹⁴ *Isle of Wight County Press and South of England Reporter*, 5 September 1896, p. 5.

This would be an exciting development, as animated pictures of Ryde are not known to have been produced in that period. However, it is most likely that the images of the pier were lantern slides, particularly as the transition from day to night was a common leitmotif in lantern projection. Confusion concerning the animated pictures is emphasised further by a preview from the same newspaper which also blended together the animated pictures and lantern slides in its description:

grand diorama of animated pictures, England to America, which will be given on Thursday, Friday and Saturday afternoon and evening. There will be over 100 views, which will include Ryde, by day and night.⁹⁵

Despite such confusion, the newspaper review the following week was positive, particularly concerning the animated pictures:

The view of the train coming into a station, and the people leaving, a crowded London street, dancers, &c., were wonderfully realistic. The performance is to be repeated this evening and no one ought to miss it.⁹⁶

The autumn lantern season was fast approaching by the time the Ryde exhibition finished and Banks continued to lecture on the mainland for the remainder of the year.

The Brixton and Clapham Camera Club

Banks and Greaves showed animated pictures each evening at the Brixton and Clapham Camera Club exhibition, which took place from 6 to 10 October. It is possible that the exhibition took place at the Club's usual meeting premises in Brixton Hall, South London. *The British Journal of Photography* reported the event but unfortunately stated that 'pressure on our space obliges us to be very brief in referring to the Exhibition'⁹⁷ and so they simply provided a summary of the exhibitors and did not go into any detail concerning the Vivaceographe. Coincidentally, the Prosser Roberts Company, which exhibited in Croydon and Woolwich, was present to exhibit their apparatus and give X-ray demonstrations, although it is not clear if they also showed a cinematograph.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ *IWO*, 5 September 1896, p. 8.

⁹⁶ *IWO*, 12 September 1896, p. 8.

⁹⁷ *BJP*, 43.1902 (16 October 1896), p. 664.

⁹⁸ *Photographic News*, 40.42 (16 October 1896), p. 676.

Romford

Even less is known of Banks and Greaves' foray to Romford in Essex at the end of October. On 23 October *The Essex County Chronicle* simply reported that Banks and Greaves had exhibited their animated photographs the previous evening at the Corn Exchange 'before an appreciative audience'.⁹⁹

Queen of the Suburbs

As we know from the Ealing case study, Banks and Greaves exhibited the Vivaceographe at the Lyric in Ealing, from Monday 9 to Wednesday 11 November.¹⁰⁰ Banks followed his usual format, showing animated photographs as part of a varied programme, including dioramic tours and lectures, and illustrative songs and ballads. Although there is no reference to the films shown, it is probable that the film programme would not have altered significantly within the space of a few months and the Ealing audience saw the films that Banks had showed in Guernsey two months earlier.

Canterbury

By the end of November, Banks was treading the boards at the Theatre Royal in Canterbury, Kent. His engagement began on Monday 30 November, and he was present for at least several days as a newspaper report also mentions his performances on Tuesday 1 and Wednesday 2 December.¹⁰¹ Banks received favourable reviews from the local newspapers and the animated pictures were well received, with *The Kent Herald* reporting that 'the animated pictures were exceedingly good'.¹⁰² Another local newspaper informed readers that:

The Vivaceographe "animated pictures" were admirable examples of the wonders of photographic science. By means of a series of views photographed at the rate of about 15 per second the action of a rough sea dashing against a sea wall, a serpentine skirt dancer, etc., were splendidly illustrated.¹⁰³

It is interesting that the rate of photography is emphasised here, rather like the emphasis on the rate of projection that was advertised in Ealing a couple of months earlier.¹⁰⁴ It also suggests that the rate of photography and projection were fairly aligned (around fifteen or

⁹⁹ *Essex County Chronicle*, 23 October 1896, p. 8.

¹⁰⁰ For further information concerning the exhibition in Ealing see Chapter Two, p. 63 of this thesis.

¹⁰¹ *Kent Herald*, 3 December 1896, p. 4

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Kent Gazette and Canterbury Press*, 5 December 1896, p. 5.

¹⁰⁴ *MCT*, 10 October 1896, p. 6.

sixteen frames per second). This would have been true for some, but not all, of the films exhibited by Banks. Any Kinetoscope films Banks exhibited would have been taken at a rate of around forty frames per second, and projected at a slower rate than they were originally designed to be viewed.

The Swindon Corn Exchange

As part of a special attraction for the Christmas holidays, Banks exhibited the ‘Greatest Scientific and Popular Marvel of the Age’ at the Swindon Corn Exchange. The variety entertainment commenced on Boxing Day and continued for one week.

CORN EXCHANGE. SWINDON.

The Event of the Season !
Immense Attraction for the Xmas and New Year
Holidays.
Great Engagement of MR. HORACE BANKS'

POPULAR DIORAMIC TOURS,
Including the Greatest Wonder of the Age,
THE ANIMATED PICTURES.
Illustrative Songs and Ballads by Talented Artistes.
The VIVACEOGRAPH is the Greatest Scientific and
Popular Marvel of the Age, representing with extra-
ordinary accuracy Scenes of Every-day Life.

Living Moving Realities
Direct from Olympia, London.

Commencing *BOXING DAY, Dec. 26th,*
and all the following week.

Doors open 7-30; commence at 8 o'clock; early doors
3d extra to avoid the crush, open at 7.

Prices of Admission:—Reserved 2s 6d; Front 2s;
Second 1s; Back (limited) 6d.

Matinees Dec. 26th, 28th, 30th, and Jan. 2nd.
Doors open at half-past 2; commence at 3 o'clock.

No one should miss this Great Treat. Plan and Tickets
at Mr OUSEY'S, Bookseller, Wood St., Swindon.

Fig. 6.12 Advertisement, Swindon Corn Exchange, *The Swindon Advertiser*, Wilts, Berks and Glo'ster Chronicle, 19 December 1896, p. 1.

The Swindon Advertiser described how many of the tradesmen in Swindon closed their businesses over the Christmas period, enabling ‘both tradesmen and their assistants to visit friends at a distance, or to avail themselves of a holiday in the town. For such there are plenty of attractions’ and Horace Banks’ entertainment was suggested as one such attraction.¹⁰⁵ This gives us an indication of the class of people frequenting the Corn Exchange. Unfortunately *The Swindon Advertiser* did not publish an issue during the New Year period so there are no reviews from that publication, but *The Western Daily Press*

¹⁰⁵ *Swindon Advertiser*, 26 December 1896, p. 4.

reviewed the Boxing Day entertainment and reported that there had been a large attendance and the entertainment concluded with ‘the now popular animated pictures’.¹⁰⁶

Benevolent Banks

On 12 January 1897 an annual banquet and entertainment was held at Guildhall, London for poor children from the area. The medieval Great Hall played host to around one thousand two hundred and fifty children who entered the imposing and impressive hall ‘two and two, talkative and excited’. After their meal of ‘cold roast beef, a hunk of bread, mug of milk, and an apple and orange for desert’¹⁰⁷ the tables were cleared and the lights turned off in preparation for a dioramic pantomime of Cinderella coordinated by Banks, who was providing his services for free.¹⁰⁸ This was followed by the Vivaceographe and it was reported that ‘the animated photographs have now become so popular that they were looked for as a matter of course’.¹⁰⁹ It is worth remembering that this observation was made by a London-centric reporter and this expectation was not necessarily the case in the suburbs and provinces at this stage. Despite detailed descriptions of the event in *The Daily News* and *The Morning Post*, the films are not referred to specifically which is disappointing as it would be interesting to know which films were shown and if they were tailored in any way for the young audience.

Croydon

As described in the Croydon case study, Banks visited Croydon on 4 March to give an entertainment at the Public Hall. Animated pictures were included but the emphasis seemed to be on the dioramic tour ‘England to America’ on this occasion, so we do not know what films were shown or how they were received in Croydon.¹¹⁰

Southsea

By the spring of 1897, Banks was in Southsea, close to Portsmouth on the Hampshire coast. He performed a matinee and evening concert party in the Clarence Esplanade Pier Pavilion on Saturday 1 and Monday 3 May, with admittance only sixpence. The first weekend in May was traditionally associated with May Day celebrations welcoming the start of spring, so there would have been an atmosphere of excitement and celebration in the seaside town. The entertainment included the usual limelight views, an international

¹⁰⁶ *Western Daily Press*, 28 December 1896, p. 6.

¹⁰⁷ *Daily News*, 13 January 1897, p. 6.

¹⁰⁸ *Morning Post*, 13 January 1897, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ *Daily News*, 13 January 1897, p. 6.

¹¹⁰ See Chapter One, p. 48 of this thesis for more information concerning their exhibition in Croydon.

tour, ballads, songs and ‘an admirable exhibition of animated pictures’.¹¹¹ Although Banks was paying a ‘return visit’, it was also reported that the Vivaceographe was being ‘introduced’ to Southsea¹¹² which indicates that this seaside resort formed part of his annual tour in the past before he acquired a cinematograph.

The Portsmouth Evening News printed detailed advertisements over the course of several days which listed a selection of twelve animated pictures (**Fig. 6.13**) many of which we have not seen referred to in connection with Banks prior to this engagement. The large number of films listed is surprising given that Banks was only in Southsea for two nights, and advertisements for other towns he visited are not so detailed, but this may be partly explained by the inclusion of several local films made in nearby Portsmouth.

C L A R E N C E P I E R.

SATURDAY AND MONDAY,
MAY 1st and 3rd, 1897, at 3.30 and 7.30.

SATURDAY:
THE STRING BAND OF THE ROYAL
MARINE LIGHT INFANTRY.

MONDAY:
THE STRING BAND OF THE ROYAL
MARINE ARTILLERY.

Return Visit of
MR. HORACE BANES
POPULAR DIORAMIC TOURS—

A series of Views representing Picturesque New
 Zealand, and England to America.
100 MAGNIFICENT VIEWS.
 Illustrated Songs and Ballads by Talented Artists.

THE VIVACEOGRAPHE,
THE SENSATION OF THE AGE!
 Representing with extraordinary accuracy scenes of
 every-day life. Direct from the Olympia, London.

ANIMATED PICTURES,
 Including amongst others Skirt Dancer—Rough Sea
 at Brighton—Railway Station—Sailors at Gun Drill
 —Ferry Boat Landing Passengers at Portsmouth—
 Paddock Scene, Gatwick—Workmen leaving Dock-
 yard, Portsmouth—Carpenters' Workshop, shavings
 catch fire—Street Fight—Bank Holiday in Brighton
 —Man Diving—Czar entering Paris—A Selection
 from above each Entertainment.

THE NEW PHOTOGRAPHY (ROENTGEN X RAYS).
 The Illustrated Songs and Ballads will be sung by
MISS CARLOTTA LINNE,
 Soprano, L.A.M.
MR. RICHARD EVANS,
 The Well Known Welsh Tenor
MISS FRANCES LITTAUR,
 At the Pianoforte.
MR. PERCY E. YOUNG,
 Royal English Opera.

Concluding with Grand Display of Statuary with
 Dioramic Effects by Mr. W. D. Plummer.

ADMISSION—SIXPENCE.

Fig. 6.13 Advertisement, Clarence Pier, *The Portsmouth Evening News*, 29 April 1897, p. 1.

¹¹¹ *PEN*, 3 May 1897, p. 2.

¹¹² *Era*, 8 May 1897, p. 22.

Worthing

It is not currently known where Banks' concert party took him following his Southsea engagement. But we do know that from around 19 July Banks was back on the south coast at the Worthing Pier Pavilion, with his usual programme of dioramic excursions, animated pictures, songs and ballads. According to a review in *The Era* there were 'enthusiastic audiences'.¹¹³ On this occasion Mr W. D. Plummer was managing the dioramic effects which suggests that Greaves was not present.

Bognor Regis

In the early days of the cinematograph – when a perspiring operator in a small dark box, worked the machine by hand – the first few pictures would linger visibly on the screen, and remain for a moment stationary before the shutter passed over them-flick-flick-flick-

But gradually, as the operator worked up speed, you were no longer conscious of the dark interval between each picture, and the rapidity of their passage lulled you into a deception of slow movement, clear and smooth. [...] A holiday is like that. The first days linger almost endlessly. [...] But gradually, relentlessly – time gathers speed. At night you sleep so soundly that you scarcely notice the darkness that flicks across to reveal the picture of another day.¹¹⁴

The novel *The Fortnight in September* by R. C. Sherriff follows an ordinary suburban family from Dulwich on their annual two-week holiday in Bognor. The simple but realistic account cleverly paints a picture of life in this rather sleepy and genteel seaside town, one in which holidaymakers enjoy walking along the promenade, playing cricket and making sandcastles on the beach, dozing in deckchairs and spending an evening at the theatre. Although written in 1931, much later than our period in question, the atmospheric depiction of the town and the description of the holidaymakers in the novel would certainly have been a familiar scene in Bognor Regis in 1897.

After Worthing, Banks travelled west along the coast to Bognor to commence a six-night engagement from Monday 2 August. *The Era* reported that 'the views are highly effective, and a really first-class concert adds to the pleasure of the entertainment'.¹¹⁵ The venue was the newly-opened Victoria Theatre which had been converted from a chapel in

¹¹³ *Era*, 24 July 1897, p. 21.

¹¹⁴ R. C. Sherriff, *The Fortnight In September* (London: Persephone Books, 2006), p. 205.

¹¹⁵ *Era*, 7 August 1897, p. 19.

1896 to host touring productions, melodramas and comedies. According to Gerard Young, a prominent local historian, ‘there was some local prejudice against the use of the former Congregational chapel as a theatre and audiences were thin, sometimes causing companies to be stranded in the town without funds’.¹¹⁶ Banks evidently faced no such predicament as his entertainment ‘met with a good reception’.¹¹⁷

Rhyl

Towards the end of the month Banks was showing the Vivaceographe and giving his dioramic excursions in the Denbighshire seaside resort of Rhyl, on the north east coast of Wales. The venue was the Grand Pier Pavilion, which was sadly destroyed by fire only four years later. *The Manchester Courier* reported the ‘magnificent’ scene of destruction and recalled the history of the pavilion: ‘Several years ago [...] the building was converted into a theatre, and used by the best travelling companies. The whole place was built of wood and iron, and was capable of accommodating three thousand people’.¹¹⁸ The pavilion truly was ‘grand’ in all senses of the word and would have been an impressive venue in which to conduct a concert party (**Fig. 6.14**). The engagement presumably commenced on Monday 16 August as *The Era* reported ‘during the week Mr Horace Banks dioramic excursions, Vivaceographe animated pictures, including the Queen’s Jubilee procession, have been presented with great success’.¹¹⁹



Fig. 6.14 Rhyl Pier Pavilion, date unknown.

‘The Grand Pavilion Destroyed by Fire’, *Rhyl History Club*, 2012

<<https://rhyllhistoryclub.wordpress.com/2012/02/17/the-grand-pavilion-destroyed-by-fire-1901/>>
[accessed 23 September 2015]

¹¹⁶ Gerard Young and Derek Young, *A History of Bognor Regis* (Chichester, Sussex: Phillimore, 1983), p. 204.

¹¹⁷ *Era*, 7 August 1897, p. 19.

¹¹⁸ *Manchester Courier* (Weekly Supplement), 21 September 1901, p. 5. With thanks to information cited by the Rhyl History Club, ‘The Grand Pavilion Destroyed By Fire, 1901’, 2012 <<https://rhyllhistoryclub.wordpress.com/2012/02/17/the-grand-pavilion-destroyed-by-fire-1901/>> [accessed 23 September 2015].

¹¹⁹ *Era*, 21 August 1897, p. 21.

Worthing revisited

Banks was back at Worthing Pier Pavilion after only a month away, which suggests that his engagement there in July had been a success. It is likely that he was engaged there for a week from Monday 23 August as *The Era* reported briefly that ‘Mr Horace Banks is here with his enjoyable Dioramic Excursions’.¹²⁰

The Isle of Wight

During his 1897 tour, Banks paid a return visit to the Isle of Wight. From 13 September he was treading the boards at Ventnor Pavilion for one week, showing his dioramas and animated pictures, with Mr W. D. Plummer once again at the helm of the dioramic effects. In addition to the Queen’s Jubilee Procession, a film of Niagara Falls was also advertised and it was emphasised that Banks had exhibited at the Guildhall before the Lord Mayor.¹²¹ We know that the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress were present at the Guildhall Charity Banquet in January that year,¹²² so the claim seems factual. The entertainment in Ventnor was well-regarded in the local press but attendance was an issue:

we regret to say (owing to counter attractions out of doors) the audiences have not been good. The animatograph and the panoramic views and effects have been admirable, and the singing good. We trust the entertainments will receive better patronage the last two nights.¹²³

Even a recent article extolling the merits of watching the Jubilee Procession on film did not seem to have encouraged attendance:

Those who saved a guinea by not seeing the Royal Procession on Jubilee Day will do well to see the historic pageant reproduced by means of the cinematographe. I have seen both, so can vouch for the accuracy of the latter. It is a most realistic representation. Crowds surge to and fro, police move along the route, the overhanging floral decorations blow this way or that, and above all the actual procession moved along with the dignity of a state occasion. The movements of the troupes and horses are perfect, kettle drummers beat the drones, soldiers salute, and when the Royal carriages appear the crowd is seen

¹²⁰ *Era*, 28 August 1897, p. 25.

¹²¹ *Isle of Wight Advertiser*, 11 September 1897, p. 4.

¹²² *Daily News*, 13 January 1897, p. 6.

¹²³ *IWM*, 18 September 1897, p. 5.


to frantically wave their hats in the air. It takes 22,000 pictures to represent the above in about twenty minutes.¹²⁴

This description appears in a newspaper section chronicling London life, and although it is not referring specifically to the Jubilee film shown by Banks, it does provide a flavour of what the Ventnor audience experienced by means of the Vivaceographe.

St Leonards-on-Sea

Banks was presenting the Vivaceographe in the East Sussex seaside town of St Leonards in November, somewhat out of the usual tourist season. He was booked to perform at St Leonards Pier Pavilion from Monday 8 November for one week. Admission to the Pier was twopence, with free admittance to the Pavilion. Once inside the Moorish-inspired building, which could accommodate up to around seven-hundred people, seating ranged from sixpence to two shillings.¹²⁵

ST. LEONARDS PIER.

Musical Director :  *Mr. Val. Marriott.*

Monday, Nov. 8th,

And every evening during the Week
at 8.0 p.m.

Matinees — Wednesday, Thursday, and
Saturday Afternoon at 3.

MR. HORACE BANKS'

DIORAMIC EXCURSIONS

Including the Wonderful Vivaceographe Animated
Pictures, and a magnificent representation of the

QUEEN'S JUBILEE PROCESSION

ASSISTED BY

Miss CARLOTTA LYNNE.
Miss CLARISSA MATTHEWS.
Mr. Richard EVANS. Mr. Percy G. YOUNG.
Mr. W. D. PLUMMER.

Sunday Evening-Illustrated Sacred Concert. Monday and
Saturday-Picturesque New Zealand. Tuesday and Thursday
Afternoon-Japan and its People. Wednesday and Saturday
Afternoon-England to America. Thursday-A Tour in the
Channel Islands. Friday and Wednesday Afternoon-Queen
Victoria's Reign.

Admission to the Pier 2d., to the Pavilion free. A limited num-
ber of Reserved Seats 2s., including toll. Other Seats, 1/-, 6d.,
and 2d. Gallery, 6d.

Special late Train leaves West Marina at 10.51 for Bexhill, Pevensey
and Eastbourne.

**All Communications to be addressed to the
Acting Manager.**

Next Week ... "EAST LYNNE."

Fig. 6.15 Advertisement, St. Leonards Pier, *Hastings, St Leonards and Bexhill Amusements*, 8 November 1897, p. 9.

¹²⁴ *Isle of Wight Guardian*, 11 September 1897, p. 5.

¹²⁵ *Hastings and St Leonards Chronicle*, 10 November 1897, p. 6.

In a different advertisement the Queen's Jubilee Procession was highlighted and the Vivaceographe was described as 'the original as exhibited at Olympia, and before the Lord Mayor at Guildhall, London'.¹²⁶ There was a very positive review in the press which described the animated photographs as 'wonderfully clear, and much longer than the average living pictures which we have seen. There is a capital view of the Diamond Jubilee Procession'.¹²⁷ A musical version of East Lynne had been due to run the following week but it did not transpire and it was advertised that Banks was engaged for an additional week: 'Owing to the Great Success, Special Re-Engagement for one Week Longer!'.¹²⁸ There was an additional newspaper review but it did not focus particularly on the animated pictures, although we do know that they concluded the entertainment and that Mr Plummer was again in charge of the dioramic effects.¹²⁹



Fig. 6.16 St Leonards Pier, c. 1910.

'St Leonards Pier', *Hastingschronicle.net*, 2015

<<http://www.hastingschronicle.net/stLeonardsPier.html>> [accessed 23 September 2015]

Croydon re-visited

Banks and Greaves were due to re-visit Croydon on Thursday 9 December to give an entertainment at the Public Hall about 'Queen Victoria's Glorious Reign'.¹³⁰ This engagement is described in further detail in the Croydon case study.¹³¹ It does not seem to have been reviewed in the local press but it is likely that Banks would have chosen to show *Queen's Diamond Jubilee Procession* as part of his film selection.

¹²⁶ *Hastings and St Leonards Observer*, 13 November 1897, p. 1.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹²⁸ *Hastings and St Leonards Advertiser*, 18 November 1897, p. 8.

¹²⁹ *HLO*, 20 November 1897, p. 3.

¹³⁰ *CSG*, 29 September 1897, p. 8.

¹³¹ See Chapter One, p. 48 of this thesis for more information concerning their exhibition in Croydon.

Chesterfield

The final town visited by Banks in 1897 appears to be the Derbyshire market town of Chesterfield where his entertainment was the Christmas holiday attraction at the Memorial Hall. It was just a short engagement for two nights and two matinees only, taking place on Monday 27 December (Boxing Day) and Tuesday 28 December. Banks was accompanied as usual by his concert party and the entertainment was to feature the Vivaceographe, dioramic excursions and ‘bright songs and sparkling music’.¹³² Unfortunately there do not seem to be any reviews in the local press and *The Era* only briefly reported that the engagement was taking place.¹³³

Identifying Vivaceographes

The films or ‘Vivaceographes’ that Banks exhibited were occasionally referred to in local press reviews and advertisements, but it is difficult to identify conclusively each film that Banks exhibited using these sources alone. Although it is relatively straightforward to name the ‘three Japanese ladies indulging in a pretty fan and shawl dance’¹³⁴ as Edison’s Kinetoscope film *Japanese Dance*, a generic film such as a beach scene or train arriving at a station is far more challenging to attribute to a particular filmmaker. Even if local newspaper advertisements made a specific reference to a film title, or a reviewer described his viewing experience in detail, identification remains difficult due to the tendency of early filmmakers to reproduce similar subjects and plagiarise popular films. Having considered the press and audience reception to the films Banks exhibited, two important considerations remain: to identify who produced these films and to determine why Banks chose to exhibit these particular films.

By using newspaper reports and advertisements, I have established the subject of twenty films¹³⁵ that Banks exhibited during 1896 and 1897, which in turn helps to identify possible filmmakers. There may well be other films exhibited by Banks that went unrecorded in the local press or other primary records, but these twenty films piqued the interest of the venues, audience or reviewers to warrant special mention.

¹³² *Derbyshire Times and Chesterfield Herald*, 25 December 1897, p. 4.

¹³³ *Era*, 1 January 1898, p. 30.

¹³⁴ (*Guernsey Star*, 1 September 1896, p. 2.

¹³⁵ The table in Appendix 7 records the range of subjects in Banks’ film repertoire and shows the earliest date of exhibition, along with details of where Banks is known to have shown each film.

Skirt dance

We know from press reviews that Banks exhibited a skirt dancing film in Folkestone, Jersey, Guernsey, Canterbury and Southsea. In Folkestone a review simply referred to ‘skirt dancers’,¹³⁶ which might suggest that it was the Paul-Acres film *Dancing Girls/Skirt Dancers* (1895/1896). However, other reviews indicate that it was a solitary dancer. In Guernsey a review described ‘a lady going through a skirt dance’,¹³⁷ and in Southsea the film was listed as *Skirt Dancer*.¹³⁸ The Jersey reviews are even more enlightening, alluding to a girl performing a skirt dance,¹³⁹ as well as mentioning her graceful performance¹⁴⁰ and the serpentine motions of her dress.¹⁴¹ In Canterbury the film was also described as a ‘serpentine skirt dancer’.¹⁴² From these insights we can surmise that the film featured a serpentine dancer with a focus on the flowing movements of her dress. Loïe Fuller was the originator of the serpentine dance in 1889, and either Fuller or an imitator can be seen performing in the brightly coloured Lumière *Danse Serpentine* (circa 1897-1899),¹⁴³ and there may also have been an earlier version from 1896. However, as Trewey held the rights to Lumière films in 1896 it is most probable that Banks was showing an Edison kinetoscope film featuring Annabelle Whitford Moore, the famous American vaudeville performer, who appeared in *Annabelle Serpentine Dance* (1895). The still pictures below from Fuller’s *Serpentine Dance* (1897) for Edison provide a wonderful sense of the movement that skirt dancing generated.¹⁴⁴



Fig. 6.17 *Serpentine Dance*, 1897.
‘Home Page’, *Edisonart.com*, 2015 <<http://www.edisonart.com>>
[accessed 23 September 2015]

¹³⁶ *FH*, 4 July 1896, p. 9.

¹³⁷ (Guernsey) *Star*, 1 September 1896, p. 2.

¹³⁸ *PEN*, 29 April 1897, p. 1.

¹³⁹ (Guernsey) *Star*, 29 August 1896, p. 2.

¹⁴⁰ *JEA*, 26 August 1896, p. 2.

¹⁴¹ (Guernsey) *Star*, 29 August 1896, p. 2.

¹⁴² *KG*, 5 December 1896, p. 5.

¹⁴³ *Danse Serpentine* (c. 1897-1899) is available to view online: ‘Danse Serpentine, [II]’, *Catalogue Lumière*, 2013 <<http://catalogue-lumiere.com/danse-serpentine-ii/>> [accessed 23 September 2015].

¹⁴⁴ The Edison Art Company is an excellent resource for clips and images from Edison’s early footage of Loïe Fuller and Annabelle, which are mesmerising even today. See: ‘Home Page’, *Edisonart.com*, 2015 <<http://www.edisonart.com>> [accessed 23 September 2015].

Despite being made originally for the kinetoscope, it would have been possible for *Annabelle Serpentine Dance* to have been subsequently projected on screen. Indeed, several kinetoscope films were included as part of Paul and Acres early screen performances in 1896. Barnes explains that the main issue with using kinetoscope films in this way was the fact that they were projected at a much slower rate than they were taken, and so appeared noticeably slow to audiences.¹⁴⁵ Popular kinetoscope films were also later re-made for screen projection so it is not always possible to tell which format an exhibitor such as Banks was using, particularly during 1896.

Bootblack

From contemporary records there is little evidence to help identify the bootblack film shown in Folkestone by Banks in June 1896. Paul and Acres jointly produced a Kinetoscope film in the summer of 1895 entitled *Comic Shoe Black*¹⁴⁶ (or possibly *Shoeblack Working in a London Street*). The title '*Comic Shoe Black*', however, implies a comic narrative, whereas Banks was exhibiting films with more of an actuality quality. Edison's Kinetoscope film *New Barber Shop* or *Barber Shop Scene* produced in January 1895 refers to a shoe shiner in a catalogue description (although admittedly there is more focus on shaving than shoe shining): 'Barber Shop, representing the interior of a "Tonsorial Palace" with customer getting a "shave;" meanwhile "next" is having his shoes polished by the usual negro attendant. This is one of the most popular films ever produced'.¹⁴⁷ This film was actually a re-print of the 1893 Edison film *The Barber Shop* as the Kinetoscope Company proudly advertised that 'the old negative having worn out, we have had a new one taken which is superior to the old'.¹⁴⁸ Charles Musser has also posited that there may have been a third barber shop scene.¹⁴⁹ Paul himself referred to an Edison Kinetoscope film entitled *A Shoeblack at Work*,¹⁵⁰ so there are clearly several films of this nature made by Edison and Paul-Acres that Banks may have exhibited.

¹⁴⁵ Barnes, vol. 1, p. 217.

¹⁴⁶ *English Mechanic*, 14 June 1895, p. 6.

¹⁴⁷ Price list for Maguire & Baucus Ltd., c. 1897, reprinted in Stephen Herbert, *Victorian Film Catalogues* (London: The Projection Box, 1996), p. 21.

¹⁴⁸ The Kinetoscope Company, Price List of Films (May 1895), p. 3. Quoted in Charles Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures, 1890-1900 An Annotated Filmography* (New York: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), p. 168.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ *Proceedings of the British Kinematograph Society*, no. 38 (3 February 1936), p. 2. Excerpt reprinted in Barnes, vol. 1, p. 17.

Fencing

It is most likely that the fencing film shown in Folkestone was an early Edison Kinetoscope film. *Lady Fencers* produced in 1894 featured the Englehart Sisters ‘in an exciting broad-sword contest’.¹⁵¹ A second version was filmed using standard foils. In addition, *Broadsword Combat* of 1895 featuring Capt. Duncan Ross, Champion of the World, was ‘an exciting contest in full armour’.¹⁵² It is a pity the Folkestone reviews do not indicate whether the combatants were male or female, as this would clearly aid identification.

Street scene

In Jersey it was reported that a street scene was exhibited by Banks. According to one review, the film showed traffic in motion, pedestrians crossing the road and ‘busses and other vehicles passing along’.¹⁵³ A Ryde newspaper also described a ‘crowded London street’.¹⁵⁴ This reference to London could indicate that it was one of the versions of *London Street Scene* believed to have been filmed by Paul-Acres in 1895 for the Kinetoscope.¹⁵⁵ Other possibilities could be the Paul film *Blackfriars’ Bridge*, which was produced in July 1896 and featured ‘passing traffic and pedestrians’¹⁵⁶ or Paul’s *Westminster* which showed street traffic and was produced at the same time.¹⁵⁷ Unfortunately without reference to specific city landmarks, this bustling street scene cannot be firmly identified.

Japanese dance

It was a Guernsey newspaper that provided the most detailed review of Vivaceographie films,¹⁵⁸ but even so, only one film can be identified with any certainty. The ‘three Japanese ladies indulging in a pretty fan and shawl dance’ must surely be the Edison-distributed Kinetoscope film *Japanese Dance* from 1894. This film, 50 foot in length, featured the Sarashe sisters performing a representation of the Mikado dance. This was filmed sometime between October and November 1894 by the cinematographers William Dickson and William Heise. Two dancers elegantly wave their shawls whilst a third dancer in the middle of the shot performs with a fan. The film is described in one catalogue as

¹⁵¹ Price list for Maguire & Baucus Ltd., c. 1897, reprinted in Herbert, *Victorian Film Catalogues*, p. 24. Although a broadsword has a wide blade normally used for cutting, the point can be used for thrusting, like an épée.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ *JEA*, 26 August 1896, p. 2.

¹⁵⁴ *IWO*, 12 September 1896, p. 8.

¹⁵⁵ Barnes, *vol. 1*, p. 233.

¹⁵⁶ Theatrograph Film Catalogue, (November 1896). Reprinted in Barnes, *vol. 1*, p. 231.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ (Guernsey) *Star*, 1 September 1896, p. 2.

‘Japanese Dance, By three Imperial Japanese Lady Dancers in full native costume. Fine colour effect’.¹⁵⁹ It could therefore have been one of the coloured films advertised at Olympia. An extant copy of the film is held in the Library of Congress Motion Picture Repository, and the film is available to watch on-line.¹⁶⁰ Even viewing the static frame below, the impression of movement is clear and is emphasised by the swirling shawls.



Fig. 6.18 *Imperial Japanese Dance*, 1894. ‘Japanese Dance’, *Library of Congress*, 2015
<<http://www.loc.gov/item/00694125/>> [accessed 23 September 2015]

Blacksmith shop

A blacksmith’s shop with men at work was another of the films seen in Guernsey. There were several versions of this subject made by different companies in 1896 and earlier. Lumière produced *Les Forgerons* (the Blacksmiths) circa 1895/1896,¹⁶¹ as did Georges Méliès in 1896. However, the version Banks used is unlikely to be the Lumière one as the exhibitor Trewey held the sole rights to their film exhibition in Britain at that time. Méliès is known to have provided the magician David Devant with a number of films in 1896 but it is not clear whether his films were available to other exhibitors. Paul also produced *The Engineers’ Shop at Nelson Dock* which showed engineers and blacksmiths at work at Nelson Dock, London. This film was released in July 1896 so feasibly could have been obtained in time for the Guernsey exhibition in August. It is more likely, however, to have been one of Edison’s kinetoscope films entitled *Blacksmith Shop* or *Blacksmith Scene* which were filmed in 1893¹⁶² and 1895.¹⁶³ The 1893 version was, incidentally, the first film to be publicly exhibited on the Kinetoscope.

¹⁵⁹ Price list for Maguire & Baucus Ltd., c. 1897, reprinted in Herbert, *Victorian Film Catalogues*, p. 20.

¹⁶⁰ *Imperial Japanese Dance* (1894) is available to view online: ‘Imperial Japanese Dance’, *The Library of Congress*, 2015 <<http://www.loc.gov/item/00694125/>> [accessed 23 September 2015].

¹⁶¹ *Les Forgerons* (1895) is available to view online: ‘Les Forgerons (1895)’, *YouTube*, 2015 <<https://youtu.be/7XWX2ZIWK8Q>> [accessed 23 September 2015].

¹⁶² *Blacksmith Shop* (1893) is available to view online: ‘1893 Blacksmith Scene’, *YouTube*, 2015 <<https://youtu.be/DUepMcfbt8>> [accessed 23 September 2015].



Fig. 6.19 *Blacksmith Scene*, 1893.

‘1893 Blacksmith Scene’, *YouTube*, 2015 <<https://youtu.be/DUepMcfbbt8>> [accessed 23 September 2015]

Beach in summer time

With a subject close to their hearts, the Guernsey audiences viewed a scene of a beach in summer time with children paddling in the sea and waves breaking on the shore. The producer of this film has proved elusive as it was a popular subject matter recorded by several filmmakers during, or prior to, 1896. The Brighton photographer and filmmaker Esmé Collings produced several Brighton beach scenes during the summer of 1896, including *Children Paddling/Children Playing In the Sea*, *Bathers on the Beach at Brighton*, *Brighton Front on a Bank Holiday*, and *Boys Scrambling for Pennies under the West Pier*.¹⁶⁴ In October 1896 the *Brighton Gazette* reviewed a selection of Collings’ films and also referred to ‘children paddling and playing on the sands’,¹⁶⁵ which correlates with the subject of the film exhibited by Banks. Nevertheless, without uncovering a more detailed synopsis of Collings’ film, it is impossible to verify if they were one and the same. In any case, did Banks have the opportunity to obtain such a recently filmed subject in time for his Guernsey exhibition at the end of August? Perhaps Banks acquired a copy during his tour of the south coast, but this would be an exciting (if unlikely) prospect as John Barnes suggests that the first public exhibition of Collings’ Brighton films was not until late October 1896.¹⁶⁶ If Banks exhibited one of Collings’ films in Guernsey, it would therefore pre-date the Brighton exhibition, making it the earliest record of Collings’ film work being exhibited to the public.

¹⁶³ *Blacksmith Shop* (1895) is available to view online: ‘New Blacksmith Shop (1895)’, *YouTube*, 2015 <<https://youtu.be/Of4w1ywRh2o>> [accessed 23 September 2015].

¹⁶⁴ John Barnes includes a stock list of films made by Esmé Collings in *vol. 1*, pp. 261-265.

¹⁶⁵ *Brighton Gazette*, 22 October 1896, p. 8.

¹⁶⁶ Barnes, *vol. 1*, p. 187.

As the Collings provenance is inconclusive, it is necessary to consider alternative sources. Birt Acres is believed to have filmed a scene of children playing on Yarmouth beach in July 1896 (*Yarmouth Sands*) but a description of the film has not yet come to light.¹⁶⁷ Acres is not known to have issued a film catalogue marketing films for sale as early as 1896, but this does not preclude the possibility that his films were sold to exhibitors such as Banks. Robert Paul filmed scenes at Brighton whilst he was exhibiting the Theatrograph there in July 1896, including one entitled *On Brighton Beach*. However, a contemporary review emphasises the landing of a boat by a party of young men and women, with comic incidents,¹⁶⁸ which does not correspond with Banks' film.

It is intriguing that a film of children playing on a beach was also shown in Guernsey and Jersey in February 1897 as part of a programme of films managed by a gentleman called Mr. Newbury. In Jersey the scene was described as 'a merry party of light-hearted children playing on the sands at Margate, with fast advancing tide in the background',¹⁶⁹ and similarly in Guernsey: 'on the sands at Margate represented a number of children enjoying themselves, as only children can, with spade and bucket on the beach; in this scene the advancing and retreating waves were faithfully depicted'.¹⁷⁰ Sounding remarkably like the film Banks exhibited the previous summer in Guernsey, unfortunately the source of this film is also a mystery, although from information in the Guernsey press we know it was capable of being shown on a Riggs machine.¹⁷¹ Robert Paul is known to have filmed in the seaside resort of Ramsgate,¹⁷² less than four miles from Margate, which leads me to believe that he was the producer of this *Margate Sands* film.

Arrival of train at station

A film showing the arrival of a train at a station was exhibited in Guernsey and Ryde in August and September 1896. The subject matter is well-known from the Lumière film *L'Arrivée d'un train à La Ciotat*,¹⁷³ and Martin Loiperdinger explains that there were at least three versions of this particular film documented in 1896 and 1897, as well as at least another two films made by Lumière featuring a train arriving at a station.¹⁷⁴ Paul also produced a film in May 1896 entitled *Arrival of a Train* or *Arrival of the Paris Express at*

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 239.

¹⁶⁸ BG, 2 July 1896, p. 6.

¹⁶⁹ JT, 4 February 1897, quoted in Damer Waddington, *Panoramas, Magic Lanterns, Cinemas*, p. 197.

¹⁷⁰ (Guernsey) *Star*, 2 February 1897, p. 2.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Robert Paul filmed two versions of *Rough Sea at Ramsgate* in May 1896. See the Theatrograph Film Catalogue, (November 1896), reprinted in Barnes, vol. 1, p. 231.

¹⁷³ There are a number of versions available to view on-line. See, for example: 'Arrivée D'Un Train À La Ciotat (France)', *Catalogue Lumière*, 2013 <<http://catalogue-lumiere.com/arrivee-train-a-la-ciotat>> [accessed 23 September 2015]. See also *Early Cinema - Primitives and Pioneers* (UK: BFI, 2005).

¹⁷⁴ Martin Loiperdinger, 'Lumière's Arrival of the Train', pp. 102-103.

Calais which duplicated the format of the Lumière film. Intriguingly, Collings also produced a version entitled *Train Arriving at Dyke Station*, but as this was made in around August 1896 it was probably too recent for Banks to have obtained a copy. Due to the timeframe and accessibility, it is most likely that Paul's film was exhibited by Banks.

Rough sea

By the end of November 1896 Banks was also exhibiting a film showing 'a rough sea dashing against a sea wall',¹⁷⁵ the description of which helps to narrow down the possible source. The well-known Paul-Acres film *Rough Sea at Dover* from 1895 showed waves breaking over Admiralty Pier.¹⁷⁶ Viewing the film today it is quite possible that the pier could be described as a 'sea wall' due to the nature of the pier design.¹⁷⁷ Paul was also responsible for two versions of *Rough Sea at Ramsgate* filmed in May 1896. Described as *Sea No. 1* in one of Paul's catalogues, this version showed 'waves breaking in the open sea',¹⁷⁸ (rather than breaking against a wall) so this film can be ruled out. The second version, *Sea No. 2*, sounds a little more promising from its catalogue description as waves were 'breaking over stone steps'.¹⁷⁹ Further information from 1897, however, suggests that the title of the film Banks was showing was *Rough Sea at Brighton*.¹⁸⁰ This film may be connected to Esmé Collings as he filmed a rough sea film in October 1896 in Hove, which was a neighbouring town to Brighton, and which was to some extent regarded as an extension of Brighton. Collings' film, entitled *Rough Sea/The Hove Sea Wall in a Gale*¹⁸¹ also clearly refers to a sea wall, which gives further credence to the possibility of Banks showing the Collings film.

A selection of films in Southsea

The most exciting discovery in relation to Banks' programme of films has been the newspaper advertisement listing twelve films that he was due to show in Southsea in May 1897. There were a variety of films (**Fig. 6.20**), predominantly actualities, several of which featured British locations.

¹⁷⁵ *KG*, 5 December 1896, p. 5.

¹⁷⁶ Barnes, *vol. 1*, p. 233.

¹⁷⁷ *RW Paul The Collected Films 1895-1908* (UK: BFI, 2006).

¹⁷⁸ Theatrograph Film Catalogue, (November 1896). Reprinted in Barnes, *vol. 1*, p. 231.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *PEN*, 29 April 1897, p. 1.

¹⁸¹ Barnes, *vol. 1*, p. 261.



Fig. 6.20 Animated Pictures, Clarence Pier, *The Portsmouth Evening News*, 29 April 1897, p. 1.

Despite this detailed list of films, as we saw with *Skirt Dancer*, *Railway Station* and *Rough Sea*, it can still prove difficult to definitively ascertain their provenance based on a title alone. *Paddock Scene, Gatwick* may be associated with Birt Acres as he filmed *The Paddock* at Gatwick races in late 1896.¹⁸² Acres also filmed *Brighton on a Bank Holiday* in the summer of 1896. There was an 1895 Paul-Acres kinetoscope film *Carpenter's Workshop*, which was later available for screen projection, although contemporary descriptions suggest the scene focussed on the carpenters enjoying refreshments rather than shavings catching fire.¹⁸³ G. A. Smith made a film entitled *Portsmouth Ferry*, although not until 1898.¹⁸⁴ G. West & Sons also produced a couple of films which sound promising based on their title, but they were probably made too late for our purposes. Barnes refers to *Portsmouth Dockyard Gates* (described as dockyard workers leaving the main gate) but although the date is uncertain but it is likely to be from 1898. West also produced *Sailors at Field Gun Drill*, but this was also an 1898 film.¹⁸⁵

Intriguingly, but perhaps more plausibly based on the dates and titles, the majority of the films shown in Southsea may have been made by Esmé Collings. He filmed in Portsmouth in 1896, producing *Portsmouth: The Ferry* and *Workmen Leaving Portsmouth Dockyard*. Collings also made a film in Gatwick which has been referred to as *Runners at Gatwick*¹⁸⁶ or *Road Race in Gatwick*,¹⁸⁷ with the implication that it is a running or sprinting race. The original documented source for this film appears to be a German advertisement, and the title was translated by film historian Deac Rossell as *Road Race in Gatwick* from the German '*Rennen in Gatwick*'. '*Rennen*' can, however, be translated simply as racing and it could therefore just as easily have a connection with horse racing. We know that

¹⁸² Barnes, vol. 2, p. 240.

¹⁸³ Barnes, vol. 1, p. 232.

¹⁸⁴ John Barnes, *The Beginnings of The Cinema in England 1894-1901: 1898*, vol.3 (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996), p. 192.

¹⁸⁵ Barnes, vol.3, p. 207.

¹⁸⁶ BFI Screenonline: Collings, Esmé (1859-1936) Credits', *Screenonline.org.uk*, 2015

<<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/people/id/519847/credits.html>> [accessed 23 September 2015].

¹⁸⁷ Barnes, vol. 1, p. 265.

Acres filmed at the Gatwick races, so they were evidently a draw and there was interest in filming them. It would therefore be more consistent for Collings to have filmed horse racing in Gatwick, rather than a running race. There is also the possibility that there has been confusion and *Rennen in Gatwick* was in fact an Acres film. Barnes has pointed out that the Acres film *Pierrot and Pierette* was mistakenly credited to Collings on the German advertisement.¹⁸⁸ This precedent gives rise to the possibility that the Gatwick film was also mistakenly credited to Collings at the same time.

Collings is also known to have produced *Brighton Front on a Bank Holiday*, *Sailors Gun Drill* and *Czar in Paris*, all of which were filmed in 1896. I wonder whether *Street Fight* may have been the Paul-Acres film *Arrest of a Pickpocket* (also called *Street Scene*) which featured a struggle between a pickpocket, policeman and sailor. The Paul-Acres film *Footpads* may also fit the bill as it featured a gentleman and policeman being attacked in a street by three ‘footpads’ or robbers.¹⁸⁹ Both *Footpads* and *Arrest of a Pickpocket* were originally kinetoscope films from 1895 but they were also available for screen projection by the time of the Southsea exhibition.¹⁹⁰ We know that in the summer of 1896 Henry William Short was tasked by R. W. Paul to film in Spain and Portugal and he produced a number of films during his tour.¹⁹¹ One film is recorded as *Bathing* with the accompanying description: ‘A lively scene of Diving and Bathing in the Sea near Lisbon’,¹⁹² so perhaps this could be the *Man Diving* film shown by Banks. Given the potential link of several of the Southsea films to the Brighton filmmaker Collings, I also wonder whether *Man Diving* could be a previously unknown film with a Brighton connection.

We saw in the Woolwich case study that an unknown exhibitor was possibly showing Acres and Collings films in November 1896 in Woolwich and I surmised that they may have been supplied by John Tester of the British Toy Novelty Company.¹⁹³ Given the potential connection between a number of Banks’ films and Collings and Acres, he may have acquired some of his films from Tester.

The Queen’s Diamond Jubilee

A press advertisement from September 1897 declared that Banks would be exhibiting ‘special animated pictures’ of the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee and Niagara Falls at Ventnor

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 264.

¹⁸⁹ *Footpads* is extant and available to view: *RW Paul The Collected Films 1895-1908* (UK: BFI, 2006).

¹⁹⁰ Barnes, vol. 1, pp. 242-243.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p. 131.

¹⁹² List of films for the Animatographe, c. 1897, reprinted in Herbert, *Victorian Film Catalogues*, p. 28.

¹⁹³ For further details see Chapter Three, p. 86 of this thesis.

Pavilion in the Isle of Wight.¹⁹⁴ Unfortunately subsequent local press reviews do not mention these films specifically so we know only that they were regarded as ‘admirable’ by one reviewer.¹⁹⁵ The film of the Jubilee Procession could have been filmed by any one of a number of filmmakers – John Barnes identifies eighteen filmmakers who are known to have been present at the Jubilee, and there may well be more.¹⁹⁶ Consequently a large number of the films have survived and are available to view, and they give us a wonderful sense of the spectacular nature of the event that the crowds enjoyed on the day and that audiences were able to enjoy by means of the cinematograph displays like those given by Banks.¹⁹⁷

Niagara Falls

Few filmmakers are known to have ventured to film the dramatic Falls in this period, which helps us to narrow down the provenance of *Niagara Falls* which was shown in Ventnor in August 1897. Acres is believed to have made three films of Niagara Falls at the end of 1895, which would have been suitable for Kinetoscope purposes and subsequently projector viewing. Edison, Lumière and American Biograph also filmed at Niagara in 1896. Banks’ version is least likely to be the Biograph film as it was of a large gauge format and the company did not sell its equipment on the open market. The film is therefore most likely to be made by Edison or Acres, however by May 1897 even Lumière films were being made available using the Edison perforation¹⁹⁸ so without a more detailed description of the version shown in Ventnor, assigning the film to a particular filmmaker remains problematic.

It has proved a challenge to identify with any certainty the films that Banks exhibited in 1896 and 1897. We know of twenty subjects that he showed by means of the Vivaceographe, and no doubt there are more that went unrecorded. Researching these films illustrates the frequency with which filmmakers copied subjects and reproduced ideas, making identification problematic. In many cases we have only have access to a title, keyword or simple synopsis, and even if there is a detailed description available, identification is only possible when it can be compared with an extant film or if the potential source is well-documented. Without such information the process of assigning a film to a particular filmmaker can remain speculative. It does seem clear, however, that

¹⁹⁴ *IWA*, 11 September 1897, p. 4.

¹⁹⁵ *IWM*, 18 September 1897, p. 5.

¹⁹⁶ Barnes, *vol. 2*, pp. 187-189.

¹⁹⁷ *RW Paul The Collected Films 1895-1908* (UK: BFI, 2006) or online: ‘Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee (1897) – Extract’, *YouTube*, 2015 <<https://youtu.be/jnip7RRc3Q4>> [accessed 23 September 2015].

¹⁹⁸ *BJP*, 44.1933 (21 May 1897), p. 321.

Banks was exhibiting several Edison Kinetoscope films adapted for cinematograph exhibition, including a skirt dance, fencing scene and the Japanese Dance. As Kinetoscope films could often seem dim when projected on screen, this could also explain the complaints when films appeared indistinct in Folkestone, Jersey, Guernsey and Ealing in 1896. This would have been exacerbated in places where Banks only had access to limelight, rather than electric light. The remainder of his film programme appears to be a mixture of Paul-Acres Kinetoscope films (and cinematograph films made by them independently) and possibly films made by Collings.

Programming the Vivaceographe

Banks brought animated pictures to the provinces (in some towns for the very first time) and he gave audiences the opportunity not only to experience a technological wonder that had been shown in the illustrious Olympia, but also to witness acclaimed films such *Rough Sea* or *Train Arriving at a Station*. Such films had been widely reported following the Theatrograph and Cinématographe exhibitions in London in early 1896, and to some extent audiences may have entertained an expectation that these would be shown by Banks. *Train Arriving at a Station* was evidently a popular choice when shown by Banks in Guernsey in September 1896 as it was ‘probably the view which caused the greatest enthusiasm’, and apparently ‘this marvellous scene fairly brought down the house’.¹⁹⁹ Perhaps such enthusiasm was also influenced and heightened by an awareness of the reaction to the film at The Empire in London. Several of the films Banks exhibited would have resonated with audiences due to the local relevance of the subject matter, and even if they had not been filmed locally there would have been a familiar reality. The scenes of *Beach in Summer Time* and *Rough Sea* would have been of interest to local people and visitors in the seaside resorts that Banks visited, and the familiar theme would have added to their viewing experience.

Banks shares many similarities with the American travelling showman Lyman Howe, whose survival of the first season of film exhibition Charles Musser ascribes to three factors: he had a network in place as a phonograph exhibitor, he was technically proficient and he worked outside of the system of opera houses.²⁰⁰ Banks was fortunate that he could build upon his existing reputation as a proficient and well-known lantern lecturer, who set out to provide a ‘bright, novel, refined entertainment’.²⁰¹ Similar to Howe, Banks’ film programme can also be said to possess a ‘documentary impulse’ rather

¹⁹⁹ (Guernsey) *Star*, 1 September 1896, p. 2.

²⁰⁰ Musser and Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures*, pp. 67-68.

²⁰¹ *Era*, 18 April 1896, p. 23.

than featuring predominantly dancers and vaudeville stars.²⁰² Musser also considers Howe's commercial debut with his Animatoscope and explains that the organisation of his film programme relied on 'sophisticated editorial strategies' with certain films grouped together in the running order through their association or symmetry.²⁰³ The running orders of Banks' film programmes are not known, but it is clear that in general the subject matter dovetailed nicely with his existing programme of lantern slides, dioramic tours and concert parties, a complete entertainment which was described by one commentator as the combination of 'edification, amusement, interest, instruction, and delight'.²⁰⁴

Film historian Joe Kember has pointed out that 'though the cinematograph was embraced by a relatively small number of high-status lantern lecturers, for the bulk of those lecturers working parish to parish it was both expensive to maintain and tended to work against the didacticism of dominant lantern lecturing practices'.²⁰⁵ Yet in the case of Banks the cinematograph integrated particularly well with his existing lantern lecturing practices. He had a well-balanced programme of films and dioramic tours, suitable for catering to the tastes of those frequenting public halls, pier pavilions and variety theatres. Films such as *Japanese Dance* or *Niagara Falls* also involved an instructive and ethnographic element rather than having pure amusement value. Having allegedly travelled to Japan in his younger years, Banks would have been well-placed to provide contextual information on *Japanese Dance*. Indeed, one of the dioramic tours in his repertoire was entitled 'Japan and its people'²⁰⁶ so *Japanese Dance* would have worked well alongside his lecturing on the subject. The lantern lecture 'From England to America' was one of Banks' most popular dioramic tours and included lantern views of the Horseshoe Falls at Niagara. It is therefore quite natural that Banks was exhibiting a film featuring Niagara Falls, an attraction he was familiar with, possibly from personal experience. Banks may have been able to provide insights on the skirt dancing film, which is most likely to be an Edison film of Annabelle who debuted at the Columbian Exposition (the World's Fair) in Chicago in 1893. Banks himself visited the Exposition and was 'well remembered' for his 'popular illustrated lectures on the Chicago Exhibition',²⁰⁷ and so perhaps he was fortunate enough to see Annabelle performing live. Films with a seaside or naval theme are particularly noticeable in his selection of films, which perhaps reflected Banks' own interests and

²⁰² Musser and Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures*, p. 56.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

²⁰⁴ *Jersey Evening Post*, 18 October 1898, 'Theatre Royal. Animated Pictures'. Article kindly provided by the Jersey Library.

²⁰⁵ Joe Kember, 'Go thou and do likewise': Advice to lantern and film lecturers in the trade press, 1897–1909, *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 8:4 (2010), 419–430 (p. 420).

²⁰⁶ *IWA*, 11 September 1897, p. 4.

²⁰⁷ *GT*, 29 August 1896, p. 2.

background given his supposed sea-faring days. They also connected well with the general format of his dioramic tours in which the audience ‘travelled’ to exciting and far-off lands:

Starting from Fenchurch Street Station, London, Mr. Banks took his audience – in imagination – to the docks from where they depart on board one of the Line steamships. They disembark at Wellington, and here it is that the tour proper begins.²⁰⁸

By the time Banks was exhibiting the film of the Diamond Jubilee Procession in Ventnor in 1897, his lectures had been expanded to include a dioramic lecture on ‘Queen Victoria’s Reign’,²⁰⁹ so the Jubilee film also slotted in well with this new element of his entertainment.

The twenty films shown by Banks embodied a range of themes which were reflective of contemporary audience interest and preoccupations, such as vaudeville; the ethnographic and exotic; tourism, travel and the seaside, steam and speed; the urban and industrial; and spectacle and sensation.²¹⁰ Despite this diversity, the films shared common features - a focus on movement, action and the sense of being ‘endowed with life’, which was often emphasised in advertisements and reviews, particularly as many of these scenes would have been previously viewed simply as still images – in photographs, paintings and lantern slides (perhaps utilising effects to simulate movement).

As well as being ‘endowed with life’, the films exhibited by Banks were frequently described as ‘scenes of everyday life’ in reviews and advertisements. There was clearly an appeal in viewing scenes of the workaday and humdrum and in seeing the ‘everyday’ accurately projected on screen. The subjects of the films Banks showed are enlightening when considered today as they provide us with a social history as well as an insight into some societal elements that are now largely redundant in ‘everyday life’ such as blacksmiths and bootblacks. It is interesting that some scenes praised for their ‘life-like’ quality were in fact reproductions, such as *Blacksmith Shop* which was staged in Edison’s Black Maria studio. In this case, viewing actual images of the ‘everyday’ was less important than viewing an accurate representation of real life projected on screen.

²⁰⁸ *Hastings, St Leonards and Bexhill Amusements and Visitors’ Guide*, 15 November 1897, p. 4.

²⁰⁹ *IWA*, 11 September 1897, p. 4.

²¹⁰ Many of these themes are considered in depth in Chapter Seven of this thesis.

The Wonderful Vivaceographe

Unfortunately, none of the advertisements and reviews I have uncovered for the Vivaceographe provide any indication as to the origin of the apparatus. Logic dictates that Banks and Greaves either constructed the Vivaceographe or acquired it from another source. If it was of their own construction or modification, this would have been an achievement given their early arrival into the field of animated picture exhibition. If the machine was purchased, it must have been one of the first cinematograph models available on the market, such as Theatrograph. They were advertising the 'Wonderful Vivaceographe' in the trade press as early as 25 April 1896,²¹¹ and as a similar advertisement the previous week makes no mention of the machine,²¹² this suggests that they acquired the Vivaceographe during the intervening period. From April that year, advertisements for cinematograph apparatus were gradually appearing in *The Era*, usually under the generic term 'cinematograph(e)',²¹³ but it is not clear if these machines were independently produced, or whether the suppliers were selling on a recently acquired Theatrograph. Although Paul had the lion's share of the supply of cinematographic apparatus in England during 1896, he was not the sole supplier and other projectors should also be considered. Nevertheless, many of these independently produced cinematographs can be quickly ruled out due to their patent date or release date on the open market. We know that the Vivaceographe was capable of projecting the standard Edison Kinetoscope film of 35mm gauge but it does not necessarily follow that Banks was using an Edison projector. According to John Barnes, there is no record of the Edison-Armat Vitascope being taken up in England and even the Edison Projecting Kinetoscope, which 'appears to be the only apparatus of American design and manufacture to have been used in England during 1896', was not brought over to England until November 1896.²¹⁴ As Banks and Greaves were advertising the Vivaceographe for engagements from April 1896, this rules out an Edison machine. This leaves only the Theatrograph and one other machine which deserves further investigation.²¹⁵

The Kinetographe de Bedts was patented in Britain in March 1896 and may have been available on the market as early as April. It was a combined camera-projector of French design, taking 35mm film. However, as Banks and Greaves do not appear to have filmed their own subjects, it seems most likely that the Vivaceographe was the

²¹¹ *Era*, 25 April 1896, p. 24.

²¹² *Era*, 18 April 1896, p. 23.

²¹³ For example, F. Duval was advertising a Cinematographe and films in *Era*, 11 April 1896, p. 28.

²¹⁴ Barnes, *vol. 1*, pp. 200-201.

²¹⁵ Here I draw upon the research carried out by John Barnes in the chapter 'Other Inventors and Exhibitors' in Barnes, *vol. 1*, pp. 151-199.

Theatrograph – the standalone projector manufactured in London. The Theatrograph could be modified to any lantern, was capable of displaying Kinetoscope films and could be adapted for touring.

If the Vivaceographe was a version of the Theatrograph, this would also explain why the Olympia programmes advertising the Theatrograph and the Vivaceographe were so similar in format, style and wording - they were essentially the same machine. It does raise the question, however, of why Banks and Greaves did not refer to the Theatrograph in any of their publicity. Many of the early exhibitors made subtle or even direct references in their advertisements to the origin of their projector, particularly with regards to a prominent machine such as the Theatrograph. In Folkestone, for example, one newspaper advertisement clearly stated that: 'Mr. Devant uses the original and most perfect machine, which is the invention of Mr. R. W. Paul'.²¹⁶ Banks and Greaves made no such inference concerning the Vivaceographe. It was referred to as the 'Animatograph' in a report concerning the Ventnor engagement in 1897, but I believe that was a generic use of the word by the reporter on this occasion. Perhaps Banks was keen to integrate the Vivaceographe seamlessly into his lantern entertainment, without alluding to Paul or the Theatrograph. Banks was, after all, a prominent lantern lecturer who was capable of filling theatres and pavilions by means of his own reputation. If the Vivaceographe was indeed a Theatrograph, then the apparent assortment of films that Banks included in his programme also remains to be explained. Early cinema expert Frank Gray points out that 'Paul's films were exhibited throughout the country not only by Paul but also by showmen who had either purchased or hired the Paul projector, the 'theatrograph', and a programme of Paul films'.²¹⁷ It is strange then that Banks' programme of films did not feature predominantly Paul films. The assortment of films in his programme suggests that if it was a Theatrograph, then it was obtained by means of an independent dealer and Banks was also supplied with a mixed selection of films by different filmmakers.

There is one other option concerning the apparatus: Banks and Greaves constructed their own cinematograph projector. They were, after all, opticians and dealers in photographic apparatus and optical lanterns, and Greaves was an optical instrument maker and engineer. In the summer of 1896 an Aberystwyth newspaper referred to 'the new invention the Vivaceographe'²¹⁸ (although this does not confirm with any certainty that it was a uniquely constructed machine). A second piece of evidence also suggests, though again does not confirm, that the Vivaceographe was constructed by Banks and Greaves.

²¹⁶ *FP*, 13 July 1896, p. 5.

²¹⁷ Frank Gray, ed., *The Hove Pioneers and the Arrival of Cinema* (Brighton: University of Brighton, 1996), p. 19.

²¹⁸ *AO*, 23 July 1896, p. 2.

Prior to exhibiting animated pictures at Streatham Hall in South London in July 1900, Banks wrote to the London County Council concerning the safety of the Vivaceographe and describing its construction:

the films are wound on a spool and when passed through the machine are automatically wound upon another spool so that there is no loose film [...] the machine is also so constructed that in the event of the film opposite the light catching fire only the picture in that position is burnt.²¹⁹

If the apparatus was a model of the well-known Theatrograph, surely Banks would have referred to it by name in order to help allay fears concerning safety. In the letter he also refers to ‘our cinematograph’ and ‘our machine,’ although the use of the term ‘our’ is ambiguous. It would be convenient to believe that Banks was inferring that the machine was the partnership’s *own* design and construction, but the language he uses throughout the letter could merely imply ownership, rather than invention. I have not uncovered a patent for the Vivaceographe and it would have been a feat (although not an impossibility) to have constructed a machine ready for exhibition as early as April 1896,²²⁰ so quickly after the arrival of the Theatrograph and Cinématographe in London in February. If they did construct the Vivaceographe, then it seems to have been used solely by Banks as the apparatus was not marketed for sale in the standard trade press. The partnership did, however, advertise ‘Films for Sale’ in *The Era* throughout June and July 1896,²²¹ which suggests that they obtained a supply of films to use and sell on, particularly as there are no other indications that Banks and Greaves produced their own films.

A dissolving partnership

On paper Banks and Greaves had a successful partnership. By 1901 they were residing at the same Clapham Road address, as well as conducting business from there.²²² The household included Banks’ wife Annie, their two year old son (Horace John Banks) and a servant, with Leonard Greaves boarding in a separate quarter of the property.²²³ Sadly this domestic arrangement was not to last as Horace Banks filed for divorce in 1906. Banks

²¹⁹ Letter from Banks to the London County Council concerning the safety of the cinematograph. Document held in the LCC Theatres Committee Papers, London Metropolitan Archives, LCC/MIN/10,913. I am grateful to Tony Fletcher for bringing this letter to my attention.

²²⁰ *Era*, 25 April 1896, p. 24.

²²¹ See these advertisements: *Era*, 27 June 1896, p. 24; *Era* 4 July 1896, p. 24; *Era* 11 July 1896, p. 20.

²²² The 1901 census can be accessed at The National Archives in Kew and the Family Records Centre in Islington or is available online: ‘Genealogy, Family Trees & Family History Records At Ancestry.co.uk’, *Ancestry.co.uk*, 2015 <<http://www.ancestry.co.uk/>> [accessed 23 September 2015].

²²³ *Ibid.*

started divorce proceedings on 20 December 1906, claiming that his wife Annie and his former business partner Greaves had ‘habitually committed adultery’ and had been living together as husband and wife since ‘7th December 1906 and for some weeks prior to that date’. He also claimed that Horace John Banks, who was born in 1898, was in reality Greaves’ son.²²⁴ Their marriage was officially dissolved on 21 October 1907. Greaves and Annie were married by the end of the year and subsequently brought up their son as John Greaves.²²⁵ Banks was also quick to follow suit, marrying again in March 1908.²²⁶ As Annie’s sister (Lucy) was married to Horace’s brother (Samuel), the illicit relationship and subsequent divorce must have had quite an impact on the wider family.²²⁷

Meanwhile, it was not only Greaves’ personal life that was being dragged through the courts. Greaves filed for bankruptcy on 1 November 1906, only a month before the divorce proceedings started. When examined about his business affairs, Greaves explained that Banks retired from the business in August 1900 ‘when he found it was going down’.²²⁸ Greaves continued operating as ‘Banks and Greaves’ but trade gradually declined and with creditors in pursuit he was eventually forced to petition for bankruptcy.

It was an unfortunate end to the Banks and Greaves partnership, both personally and professionally. This should not detract, however, from the role that Banks played during the first two years of film exhibition in predominantly south-east England, Isle of Wight and the Channel Islands. By conducting a detailed case study of Banks during 1896 and 1897 it has been possible to create an accurate picture of the practices of a travelling exhibitor during this period. We now know many of the locations to which he toured, the types of venues he secured for engagements,²²⁹ the films he showed²³⁰ and audience reaction to them, and how his practices altered during this time. This data can take its place alongside a body of research in Britain which has tended to focus on national or local surveys or the better-known players in exhibition and production.

²²⁴ Divorce and matrimonial causes files held at The National Archives. Divorce Court File: 7269 (1906). Reference J77/898/7269. Petition of Horace George Banks.

²²⁵ Marriage registered for Leonard Greaves and Annie Banks between October-December 1907, Richmond district, volume 2a, p. 912. (GRO Index). Incidentally, for the 1911 census they reported their number of years of marriage as fourteen, rather than the actual four years. This was not surprising as they had the reputation of their twelve-year old son to consider.

²²⁶ ‘Horace George Banks’, *Certified Copy of Marriage Certificate for Horace George Banks and Frances Georgina Morris, 14 March 1908* (Application Number 1819722: Lewisham Register Office, 1908),

²²⁷ Marriage registered for Samuel Banks and Lucy Wright between July-September 1874, Edmonton district, volume 3a, p. 256. (GRO index).

²²⁸ The bankruptcy papers of Leonard Greaves are held in the National Archives at Kew, catalogue reference BT 226/1935.

²²⁹ See Appendix 6 for a table showing the locations and venues where Horace Banks is now known to have exhibited.

²³⁰ The table in Appendix 7 records the range of subjects in Banks’ film repertoire and shows the earliest date of exhibition, along with details of where Banks is known to have shown each film.

Despite a hankering for adventure, he was also a creature of habit and many of his appearances were repeat visits. Banks took the initiative and was in a position to show animated pictures in April 1896, when the technology was still in its infancy. At that stage it was not clear whether the cinematograph would have long-term possibilities or what its impact would be, but Banks evidently saw an opportunity to capitalise on the latest sensation and incorporate animated pictures into his established concert party despite the potential risks and the costs involved. This willingness to take such a risk no doubt stems in part from his background. Banks was an adventurer at heart, travelling the world from a young age, and he was confident and capable of adapting to different situations. In the same vein, he was enterprising and entrepreneurially minded and was prepared to adapt his lantern entertainment when the opportunity arose. He shared many of the strategies for success that Musser and Nelson have identified with regards to American travelling exhibitor Lyman Howe, who incidentally had similarly been a travelling salesman prior to entering the entertainment business.

Banks was flexible with his choice of venue which included variety halls, public halls, theatres, and prestigious London venues such as the Guildhall and Olympia. But it was clearly the pier pavilion where he was most at home. Sociologist John Urry describes how ‘seaside resorts in Britain normally possessed at least one pier [...] an attempt to conquer nature, to contrast a ‘man-made’ object which at all times and for ever would be there dominating [...] the sea.’²³¹ Yet sadly today only half of the piers that were standing at the turn of the twentieth century remain.²³² Many have been destroyed by storms or fire or allowed to fall into disrepair, leaving only fragments of their former glory behind. Rhyl and St Leonard’s Pier are now lost, for example, gone like so many of the films that Banks showed on them.

Banks was a trailblazer and because he operated outside the usual lantern season, he gave many people outside of London, particularly those in seaside resorts, their first experience of film. Indeed, he may have been the first person to show films on a seaside pier (in Aberystwyth). He conveyed the Vivaceographe to a variety of seaside tourist destinations during the summer of 1896 and 1897. This diversion to the coast in 1896 was instrumental in keeping animated pictures in the public eye outside of London and the major cities. On the other hand this diversion, coupled with the fact that the lantern season petered out over the summer months, largely delayed the arrival of animated pictures in a suburban town such as Ealing until the autumn of 1896.

²³¹ John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), p. 32.

²³² ‘Piers - National Piers Society Homepage’, *Piers.org.uk*, 2015 <<http://www.piers.org.uk/>> [accessed 23 September 2015].

Focusing in detail on a two-year period also enables us to see how Banks' exhibition practices changed and developed over time. Increasingly Banks engaged a specialist, such as Locke or Plummer, to operate the dioramic effects and animated pictures, enabling Banks to concentrate on the lecturing side of the entertainment which appears to be where his talents lay. It also seems the Vivaceographe went from being shown at the end of the programme to mid-way through, repositioning it as the main attraction in his entertainment.

Banks possessed an assortment of films by filmmakers such as Edison, Paul, Acres and Collings and by examining these films we see how significant projected movement and motion were to the first film audiences, as well as a curiosity with images being 'endowed with life' or showing 'scenes of everyday life'. The twenty films I have identified that were shown by Banks over the course of 1896 and 1897 were capable of catering to both working-class and middle-class tastes due to the variety and universality of the subject matter. Descriptions of the audience reception frequently suggest excitement and curiosity towards this new technology, but the reality did not always live up to expectations or to the sensationalism of the advertisements, particularly in 1896 we when see disappointment frequently recorded in the press reviews in response to the images on screen appearing blurred and indistinct, or seeming to judder. These issues improved over time, perhaps as enhancements or tweaks were made to the Vivaceographe apparatus, combined with access to better quality films.

By means of a detailed case study with an empirical approach, I have shown that a forgotten lanternist such as Horace Banks, who has languished within the confines of local newspapers for over a century, can be 'endowed with life' once more and his importance re-appraised within the context of existing histories of early cinema exhibition. Banks was a pioneer who should be recognized and commended for his role in taking animated pictures to the suburbs, provinces and south-east seaside resorts during the first two years of film exhibition, and for giving so many people their first exposure to film.

CHAPTER SEVEN

NAVIGATING THE SENSATIONAL: A VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY

The Cinema of Sensation

The case studies of Ealing, Woolwich, Croydon and the Banks and Greaves partnership have shown that a variety of film subjects were exhibited during 1896 and 1897, including vaudeville, urban and seaside views, actualities, and special events. Despite such an eclectic mix, there is a common theme which can be distilled: the sensational. Spectatorship and reception studies are important here and I will consider the notion that I term ‘Cinema of Sensation’ in relation to the well-established concept of the ‘Cinema of Attractions’. Laura Mulvey’s application of psychoanalytical theories to consider the pleasure of watching film and Miriam Hansen’s discussion of the early film viewer before Hollywood will also be pertinent. Film reception was more than simply a viewing experience in this early period: it was a multi-sensory physical experience. The sensational was also revealed through the elemental and visceral and created by films featuring an exotic, urban and ethnographically different element. References in reviews and advertisements to images on screen being ‘endowed with life’ convey how film could recreate life, which is connected to the Victorian fascination with inanimate objects coming to life. Film audience expectations and sensations in this early period were multi-layered: they were constructed in advance through hyperbolic advertisements, and they were physically heightened in the present by the active process of watching moving images projected on screen (often in a darkened room or theatre auditorium).

Eye-catching and sensational taglines were frequently employed in newspaper advertisements heralding the arrival of animated pictures, as evidenced by newspaper adverts uncovered in Croydon, Ealing and Woolwich. Hyperbolic language was frequently associated with Banks and Greaves’ Vivaceographe which was often described as the ‘Sensation of the Age’ and the ‘Sensation of the Century’. The use of the word ‘Sensation’ had an established practice in the Victorian and Georgian periods for advertising the latest and greatest entertainments such as circus, fairground and music hall acts and novelties, as well as more permanent attractions such as the Crystal Palace or Olympia.¹ ‘Sensation’

¹ For a discussion of the evolution of advertising in relation to ‘spectacle’, see Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990). For a general history of advertising see E. S. Turner, *The Shocking History of Advertising* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books with Michael Joseph, revised edition 1965).

was also a byword for causes célèbres and scandals involving adultery, divorce and even murder. Matthew Sweet and Michael Diamond have both relished writing about some of the spectacles, sensations and scandals of the Victorian period.²

The ‘sensation novel’ of the 1860s and 1870s, which focussed on controversial, shocking and melodramatic themes, also helped to create a sensationalised Victorian culture, as did the popular ‘Penny Dreadful’ magazines and serial literature. In his comprehensive overview of the sensation genre, Andrew Maunder describes sensation fiction as ‘broadly speaking [...] a form of fiction which took its label from the contemporary theatre’s ‘sensation drama’ and the accompanying displays of intense emotion and physical spectacle this encompassed’.³ It had the ability to generate a physical response from readers and ‘its shocking plots [...] were believed to assault the nerves and make the flesh creep’.⁴ Matthew Sweet describes this feeling as a ‘jangling of the nerves’.⁵ Consequently there was already an entrenched and recognised style of language that the cinematograph could employ as a framework for its publicity. The cinematograph could align with an existing sensational culture, both in terms of how it could be publicised and marketed to the public, and how the public could consume it.

The advertisement from *The Swindon Advertiser* (**Fig. 7.1**) is an excellent example of the different visual methods employed to engage a newspaper reader. Animated pictures are depicted as the ‘Greatest Wonder of the Age’ and the Vivaceographe is described as the ‘Greatest Scientific and Popular Marvel of the Age’. As if that was not enough to pique people’s interest, there is also the declaration that the entertainment has come ‘Direct from Olympia, London’. In the age of black and white newspaper print, interest could also be generated by capitalising certain words, the placement of an exclamation mark or simply by using bigger or bolder font, as seen clearly in an advertisement from a Croydon newspaper (**Fig. 7.2**).

² Michael Diamond, *Victorian Sensation, or, the spectacular, the shocking, and the scandalous in nineteenth-century Britain* (London: Anthem Press, 2004); Matthew Sweet, *Inventing the Victorians* (London: Faber & Faber, 2001).

³ Andrew Maunder, ‘Mapping the Victorian Sensation Novel: Some Recent and Future Trends’, *Literature Compass* 2.1 (2005) 1-33, p. 5.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Matthew Sweet, ‘Sensation novels’, *British Library*, 2015 <<https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/sensation-novels>> [accessed 29 September 2015].

CORN EXCHANGE. SWINDON.

The Event of the Season!
Immense Attraction for the Xmas and New Year
Holidays.
Great Engagement of MR. HORACE BANKS'

POPULAR DIORAMIC TOURS,

Including the Greatest Wonder of the Age,
THE ANIMATED PICTURES.

Illustrative Songs and Ballads by Talented Artists.
The VIVACEOGRAPH is the Greatest Scientific and
Popular Marvel of the Age, representing with extra-
ordinary accuracy Scenes of Every-day Life.

Living Moving Realities
Direct from Olympia, London.

*Commencing BOXING DAY, Dec. 26th,
and all the following week.*

Doors open 7-30; commence at 8 o'clock; early doors
3d extra to avoid the crush, open at 7.
Prices of Admission:—Reserved 2s 6d; Front 2s;
Second 1s; Back (limited) 6d.
Matinees Dec. 26th, 28th, 30th, and Jan. 2nd.
Doors open at half-past 2; commence at 3 o'clock.
No one should miss this Great Treat. Plan and Tickets
at Mr OUSEY'S, Bookseller, Wood St., Swindon.

Fig. 7.1 Corn Exchange, *The Swindon Advertiser*, 19 December 1896, p. 1.

THE RAGE OF LONDON!
THE WONDER OF THE AGE!

**LIVING
PHOTOGRAPHS**

WILL BE SHOWN IN THE

HORNIMAN HALL,
NORTH END, CROYDON,
ON
Wednesday, Thursday, Friday,
and Saturday next,
SEPT. 30th, OCT. 1st, 2nd, and 3rd,
At 6, 7, 8, and 9 p.m.
ADMISSION 6d.

Fig. 7.2 Living Photographs, *The Croydon Times*, 26 September 1896, p. 5.

Advertisements for animated pictures in the local press also highlighted an interesting relationship between the tropes of the suburban and urban. Certain taglines were used such as ‘Direct from the Alhambra’; ‘The Rage of London’; ‘as shown at Olympia’ and ‘as at the Empire’. This language encouraged the idea that the sensational was not solely the preserve of metropolitan London but could be accessed simultaneously, or at least soon after, in the suburbs and further afield (even if this was not strictly true). Well-known London variety halls and entertainment venues such as the Alhambra, Empire and Olympia had a certain caché and their names and architectural style conjured up a subtext of excitement, grandeur, travel and the exotic. Once the audience were in situ with high expectations of the visual entertainment generated by such a sensational style of advertising, the physical element of the Cinema of Sensation then became an important factor.

The notion of the Cinema of Attractions has come to the fore in the last twenty five years or so and is partly constructed in the dialectic between early film spectatorship and classical narrative cinema. Tom Gunning, the author of this concept, posits that the Cinema of Attractions is a ‘harnessing of visibility’ which bases itself on ‘its ability to *show* something’, and ‘an exhibitionist cinema’ which was displayed most prevalently until around 1906 or 1907.⁶ Gunning discusses spectatorship in terms of the relationship constructed by the ‘recurring look at the camera by actors’ and the notion of ‘establishing contact with the audience’.⁷ Consequently, a relationship with spectators is created by what is on the screen soliciting attention. However, it is the outcome of this relationship that I am particularly interested in: the physical and multi-sensory reactions of the spectator in response to a holistic viewing experience. Although physical sensations are implicit in the Cinema of Attractions, I believe that there is a distinction to be made between the concepts of the Cinema of Sensation and the Cinema of Attractions. By substituting the word ‘attractions’ with ‘sensation’, there is a corresponding shift in emphasis from the attractions on screen to the receptivity of the spectator and their engagement with film. I propose that the Cinema of Sensation is emphasised more explicitly and is even more applicable to spectatorship and reception in the very early period. This becomes particularly apparent when considering the genre of films I have identified that were exhibited in Croydon, Ealing and Woolwich during 1896 and 1897. My research shows that the majority of films exhibited were non-fiction, such as actualities; local films; street

⁶ Tom Gunning, ‘The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde’, *Wide Angle*, 8:3-4 (1986), 63-70 (pp. 63-64).

⁷ Gunning, ‘The Cinema of Attraction’, p. 64.

scenes; sporting events and state occasions.⁸ When we consider the inherently exhibitionist concept of the Cinema of Attractions, with its emphasis on eye contact, the look of actors, the idea of soliciting attention and establishing contact with the audience, it is clear that this description does not seem to fit with the types of non-fiction films that were being shown in this very early period. The Cinema of Attractions embraces filmmaking which has an innate ability to *show* something, rather than *tell*, but it does not follow that the non-fiction films I have identified fit into this category simply by virtue of lacking an obvious narrative structure. Non-fiction films in this period often contained an external narrative element such as input from a lecturer or showman. This is most clearly seen with the role of someone like Horace Banks who would have described the films he was showing to his audience and offered pertinent information. Narrators, guides and lecturers had the ability to tell the story of what was being shown on screen and to offer an explanation if it was needed. The Jubilee Procession films are perhaps the epitome of this: although they might be seen as an attraction or spectacle in their own right, there was a strong narrative thread running through the scenes which would have been further enhanced by the verbal descriptions given by the cinematograph showman or lecturer.

Laura Mulvey has used Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytical theories to discuss the pleasure of watching traditional mainstream narrative films and their connection to voyeurism, sexual desire, the gaze and fetishisation.⁹ At its core, however, the simple notion of watching films for pleasure can be applied to early silent, even non-narrative, film. Mulvey explains that ‘the extreme contrast between the darkness in the auditorium (which also isolates the spectators from one another) and the brilliance of the shifting patterns of light and shade on the screen helps to promote the illusion of voyeuristic separation’.¹⁰ Early silent film audiences may have adopted a voyeuristic role in terms of their relationship with the images on screen, but I believe that a communal relationship would have also been constructed with fellow onlookers due to the shared viewing experience. This relationship was forged by the shared intimacy of watching the new technology of projected film, often in a darkened room, and perhaps as a first-time experience for many in the audience during 1896 and 1897. For Mulvey, ‘the cinema satisfies a primordial wish for pleasurable looking’ (although she believes that it develops further into scopophilia) and she claims that the focus is on the human form, so that ‘scale, space, stories are all anthropomorphic. Here curiosity and the wish to look intermingle with a fascination with likeness and recognition: the human face, the human body, the

⁸ Appendices 2, 5 and 7 record the titles and subjects of films identified as being shown in these towns.

⁹ Laura Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’, *Screen*, 16:3 (1975), 6-18.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

relationship between the human form and its surroundings, the visible presence of the person in the world'.¹¹ Once again, this hypothesis can be applied to silent film in its early stages as the concepts of recognition and a fascination with likeness are frequently apparent, both in the films themselves and in terms of their reception which we have seen evidenced by reviews in Croydon, Ealing, Woolwich and elsewhere. Nevertheless, the focus is not solely anthropomorphic as we also see the importance of location, place and geography too.

Miriam Hansen, when writing about early film-viewer relations, cautions that one must be careful when applying an inverse teleology to early film-spectator relations as 'we confront the methodological problem of measuring them against the later norm'.¹² Hansen does, however, accept that we cannot 'escape viewing early cinema from the perspective of the fully developed institution'.¹³ When considering the pre-Hollywood mode of reception, she explains how film-viewer relations were not compatible with the traditional arts, which required extended contemplation and concentration. The visual sensations experienced through the medium of the variety format, however, were more suited to the 'distraction' and 'diversion' displayed by early films: 'the variety format provided a short-term but incessant sensorial stimulation, a mobilization of the viewer's attention through a discontinuous series of attractions, shocks and surprises'.¹⁴ There is an immediacy present, borne out of watching short films with limited narrative content or brief bursts of activity (for example views of places; state occasions; and people walking along bustling streets). These types of films leant themselves to an all-enveloping immediate sensation, rather than creating a climax over time which can be found with longer narrative films from around 1906 onwards. So the variety format into which early films were often incorporated further served to emphasise the feeling of being present in the moment and provided the audience with a recognisable mode of viewing.

Permutations of the proclamation 'The Biggest Sensation of the Century!' used in advertisements for the Theatrograph functioned on two levels. Whilst it implanted the idea that the cinematograph was a visual spectacle and essential viewing, it also had connotations of a physical sensation. The cinematograph could be more than a visual experience, and this manifested itself with the apocryphal description of a fearful audience witnessing Lumière's *L'arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* for the first time. Although

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Miriam Hansen, *Babel & Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 24.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 29.

I have already discussed the credibility of this incident,¹⁵ there is at least some validity in the idea that people could have difficulty comprehending and responding to what they were seeing on screen. One reviewer discussing films in Croydon in 1896, for example, remarked that ‘Every picture is instinct with life, and one has to rub one’s eyes to ascertain if the picture is an illusion or the thing itself’.¹⁶ Indeed, the sense that images on screen could be life-like was a key theme in advertisements and the experience of such realism was regarded with amazement by some reviewers. The physical aspect of viewing was also evident when speed and movement were emphasised in advertisements and in the films themselves, which is clearly shown by this account of the Vivaceographe: ‘photographs are thrown on the screen at the rate of one thousand pictures a minute, in order to produce life-like motions on the part of the figures represented.’¹⁷ This description is laced with the themes of movement, speed and action, by the use of the word ‘thrown’ and the emphasis on the projection rate. Speed and action were also evident in Paul’s *Paris Express*, which was described in awe by *The Strand* magazine:

Take the arrival of the Paris express at Calais station. The great train appears in the distance, and rushes forward as though to overwhelm the audience, but presently slows down in time, and discharges its living freight amid a scene of bustle and excitement.¹⁸

Central to this account is the feeling that the audience is almost physically overwhelmed, illustrating how action and movement on screen could generate a corporeal sensation.

Local press reviews and advertisements frequently described the ‘scenes endowed with life’ that Banks and other exhibitors showed in their film programmes. It may seem axiomatic that this phrase was used to describe scenes that were inherently full of animation, yet it is worth noting that many of these scenes would have been previously accessible only by means of still images in photographs, paintings and lantern slides (perhaps utilising technological effects to simulate movement where available). With the Vivaceographe, the sensation of recreating life on screen was achieved through a diverse backdrop of moving traffic, thrusting fencers, swirling dresses, and crashing waves. Images that were previously static and only imitative of movement became veritable animated projections of real life. The late-Victorian film audiences were well-attuned to the concept of inanimate objects coming to life as this theme already had a long history in

¹⁵ See Chapter Six, pp. 138-140 of this thesis.

¹⁶ *CSG*, 30 December 1896, p. 13.

¹⁷ *MCT*, 10 October 1896, p. 6.

visual and print media, particularly within ballet, literature and art. There are numerous literary archetypes in this vein, with the most famous being Victor Frankenstein's nameless monster which was chillingly given life in 1818 in Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*. Other earlier examples include the classical tale of the sculptor Pygmalion's statue being brought to life in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the metal man Talus in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. The ballet *Coppélia* from 1870 portrays the eponymous life-size dancing doll, so realistic that she is mistaken for being human. Tchaikovsky's ballet *The Nutcracker*, which premiered in 1892, features the nutcracker doll and other toys coming to life. The inspiration for these ballets can be found in the weird and wonderful tales of E. T. A. Hoffmann, where dolls come magically to life and mechanical dolls are constructed so realistically by their makers that they seem human.¹⁹

We also see the influence of mechanical automatons which often featured in travelling shows and magic shows, such as Maskelyne's mind-reading and card-playing automaton called 'Psycho'. Lieutenant Walter Cole (who took his variety entertainment to Ealing in 1897) was already well known for his 'Merry Folks' entertainment featuring electric life-size automata. This was acknowledged as an innovative method of ventriloquism compared with the more traditional 'dummy on the knee' format²⁰ and Cole created the sensation that these models could walk, talk and were endowed with life. The Victorian period also saw the popularity of performances of *tableaux vivants* which were also known as 'living pictures' or 'statues'. In her excellent monograph, *The Haunted Gallery*, Lynda Nead discusses the paradox of animation and de-animation associated with this type of performance. Individuals held a still pose reproducing a scene from a painting or sculpture, but in spite of this stillness, the transition from one position to another promoted a sense of movement and arrested motion. Nead then considers the theme of the haunted gallery or portrait, whereby pictures would come to life and step outside of the frame, an image which can be found in Victorian theatre, art and literature.²¹ The idea of films being 'endowed with life' would therefore have resonated with Victorian audiences who were already engaged with this theme through a rich and diverse tapestry of representations in the arts.

¹⁸ *Strand Magazine*, 12 (July-December 1896), p. 136.

¹⁹ *Coppélia* was based upon Hoffmann's tale *The Sandman*, and Hoffmann's *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* was the inspiration for *The Nutcracker*. For literary examples of the inanimate coming to life, see Leonard Wolf's anthology *Doubles, Dummies, and Dolls: 21 Terror Tales of Replication* (New York: Newmarket Press, 1995) and Wendy Beth Hyman, *The Automaton In English Renaissance Literature* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

²⁰ Joe Laurie, Jr., *Vaudeville: From the Honky-tonks to the Palace* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1953), p. 114.

²¹ Lynda Nead, *The Haunted Gallery: Painting, Photography, Film c.1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 69-82.

There is an interesting dichotomy between the desire for endowing life and the concurrent Victorian fascination with stillness and death. From the beginning of the nineteenth century Madame Marie Tussaud was memorable for her tours and exhibitions of realistic life-size wax statues and death masks capturing well-known public characters, royalty and revolutionaries. On a more personal level, it became popular in the Victorian period for people to have funerary photographs, often showing their recently deceased children who might appear to be sleeping or would be photographed in life-like poses. On the one hand this was a *memento mori*, a very personal and frank reminder of mortality and a method of remembrance. On the other hand perhaps this too was a way of endowing life to departed loved ones by preserving them in as life-like a manner as possible: even a 'sleeping' child would retain the possibility of awakening through the immortality of a photograph.

Although the cinematograph appeared to have the ability to endow images on screen with life, in 1897 the apparatus would be connected directly with the possibility of death following a devastating fire. Over one hundred people died on 4 May at a charity bazaar in Paris at which a cinematograph had been one of the attractions. Shocking and emotive illustrations of the disaster soon began to appear in the press (**Fig. 7.3**), which gave the public a visual frame of reference for the appalling event. British newspapers were also quick to relay the shocking details and *The Kentish Independent* listed the fatalities and recounted the appalling aftermath of the fire:

The fire commenced at 4.20 p.m. [...] It broke out in the left-hand corner of the bazaar, in the Cinematograph Exhibition, and is believed to have been due to an explosion of a lamp. [...] The bazaar, being all wood and canvas, became a mass of flame in a very few minutes. [...] Most of the victims were women, as comparatively few men were in the Bazaar. In an hour the Bazaar de la Charité was a heap of smoking ruins, which were surrounded on every side by fireman. Then the work of removing the dead began. Each corpse was carefully wrapped in a shroud with every object capable of assisting in its identification, for the victims are horribly mutilated, torn, and charred. Many of them have lost all semblance of human beings.²²

²² *KICA*, 8 May 1897, p. 2.

Le Petit Journal

Le Petit Journal
CHAQUE JOUR 5 CENTIMES
Le Supplément illustré
CHAQUE SEMAINE 5 CENTIMES

SUPPLÉMENT ILLUSTRÉ
Huit pages : CINQ centimes

ABONNEMENTS
PAR AN
SEINE ET SEINE-ET-OISE 2 fr. 3 fr. 50
DEPARTEMENTS 2 fr. 4 fr.
ÉTRANGER 2 fr. 5 fr.

Huitième année

DIMANCHE 16 MAI 1897

Numéro 339



INCENDIE DU BAZAR DE LA CHARITÉ
LE SINISTRE

Fig. 7.3 The Bazaar de la Charité, *Le Petit Journal*, *Supplément Illustré*
16 May 1897, p. 1.

In the same issue of *The Kentish Independent*, the editorial chose to focus on the issue of licensing as a root cause for the blaze, rather than taking a fundamentally alarmist stance against the medium of cinematography:

By the terrible fire in the Paris bazaar we have probably the strongest lesson that has ever been written against our habitual recklessness under the daily perils which beset us in our places of assemblage, and particularly in those places which, because they are not regularly appointed theatres and houses of entertainment, are neither required to be licensed by any constituted authority nor under the supervision of any public official.²³

The editor made a valid point here, and it would perhaps make any readers think twice about attending a bazaar or temporary entertainment venue where the cinematograph would be shown. Shortly after the accident, the medical and scientific journal *The Lancet* counselled on the dangers of celluloid. Although they did not blame the cinematograph per se, it was once again implicitly linked to the fire:

We drew attention last week to the extreme inflammability of the substance called celluloid, and we pointed out that though the celluloid films of the kinematograph employed on the occasion of a demonstration at the bazaar in Paris, where such an awful disaster happened, might not have been the primary cause of the fire, yet doubtless the presence of long sheets of this highly inflammable material accentuated the rapidity and fierceness of the conflagration.²⁴

A public inquiry into the fire concluded that an illegal quantity of ether was supplied to the cinematograph show which was using an older style oxygen-ether projecting lamp, rather than electricity. Although the absence of licensing was clearly an issue in this case, the public could not fail to associate the cinematograph and the fragility of celluloid with the fatal disaster which would continue to evoke horrific images of fire and death for many months to come.

There was something elemental about several of the films that were shown in the programmes I have uncovered. Physical nature and primitive force would have been particularly evident, for example, in the film *Niagara Falls* exhibited by Banks. The inclusion of this film in Banks' programme resulted in a multi-media and multi-sensory experience for spectators. Not only would they have the opportunity to watch

²³ Ibid., p. 4.

the deluge in action on film, but they could view enlarged still photographs of the crashing falls (probably with the illusion of movement using dioramic and stereoscopic techniques), listen to Banks lecturing on the world-famous spectacle, and perhaps even hear pertinent songs and percussion sounds from his musical troupe.



Fig. 7.4 Photochrom print of American Falls, Niagara, c1900
'American Falls, Niagara', *Loc.gov*, 2015 <<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/ppmsca.17830/>>
[accessed 29 September 2015]

Banks also showed two other scenes in which the echoes of the elemental effect of water resonated. With *Beach in Summer Time* 'the effect of the waves breaking on the shore was marvellous; one could almost fancy hearing them roar as they broke upon the shore'.²⁵ By the end of November 1896, Banks was also exhibiting a film showing 'a rough sea dashing against a sea wall'.²⁶ William Friese-Greene similarly showed *Rough Day at Hastings* during his Croydon exhibition in 1896. This too featured rough waves breaking against the sea wall and it is possible to imagine the visual power and force of the waves, despite the lack of sound normally associated with such scenes in reality.

An exhibitor such as Banks was also able to bring the experience of ethnographic otherness to suburban and seaside audiences by means of the cinematograph. *The Japanese Dance*, for example, featured 'three Imperial Japanese Lady Dancers in full native costume',²⁷ which presented an instructive and ethnographic element rather than pure amusement value. As well as being a stunning visual spectacle, the film *Niagara Falls* shown by Banks was an important geographical account and gave viewers the opportunity to see the falls in action, probably for the first time (some audience members may have

²⁴ *Lancet*, 149. 3848 (29 May 1897), p. 1481.

²⁵ (*Guernsey*) *Star*, 1 September 1896, p. 2.

²⁶ *KG*, 5 December 1896, p. 5.

previously seen only a static image of the falls, or perhaps a dioramic lantern view at most). The way in which Banks programmed his entertainments helped to temper any movement towards pure sensationalism for the vivaceographe. The focus on instruction, knowledge and broadening horizons through illustrated lectures and dioramic tours gave Banks an air of gravitas and he was regarded as an authority and prominent lantern lecturer. The multi-media format that he utilised encouraged a more sophisticated and holistic appreciation of the cinematograph from the audience in contrast to a venue such as the Alhambra where animated pictures were a discrete and sensational part of the variety programme and where the concept of 'sensation' embraced the idea of seeing the latest novelty.

In terms of appreciating other cultures and people, the ethnographic could encompass continental Europe as well as more exotic and distant lands. *The Bull Fight* exhibited on Lumière's Cinématographe in December 1897 gave Croydon suburbanites an insight into an intrinsic part of Spanish culture and society, and it was a spectacle that most would not have seen before. The Croydon Lumière programme also included *The Visit of President Faure to the Czar*, which had a French and Russian feel and theme. Although Robert Paul exhibited predominantly London and English scenes, *The Paris Express* was included in his Croydon programme. The film showed the powerful steam locomotive arriving at Calais with passengers disembarking. One might presume that the country of origin played little part in the excitement generated by the film; nevertheless, French railway stations were very different to their English counterparts. John Barnes reports that Paul was motivated to film in Calais because France generally had a more open style of train station which suited filming, compared with the English stations which were often enclosed.²⁸ So the surroundings would have looked very different visually to the English norm, which perhaps added another level of interest to the viewing experience. It is also important that the film was explicitly entitled *Paris Express*; audiences would have been conscious they were witnessing a foreign scene if they saw the film listed in an advertisement or programme, or if the exhibitor introduced the film before it was shown. The language used in advertisements also played an important role in emphasising the themes of travel and the exotic. We have seen many examples where an exhibitor's previous engagement at the Alhambra, Empire or Olympia was highlighted. Each of these central London entertainment meccas conjured up a sense of exoticness and excitement, through their name, history and reputation.

²⁷ Price list for Maguire & Baucus Ltd., circa 1897, reprinted in Herbert, *Victorian Film Catalogues*, p. 20.

²⁸ Barnes, *vol. I*, p. 225.

Phil and Bernard exhibited a continental blend of films in Woolwich, including *Parisian Views*, *Coronation of the Czar of Russia* and *Czar of Russia at Paris*, which enabled audiences to experience these important but also exotic international royal celebrations. An unknown exhibitor in Woolwich also exhibited *Procession of Czar* and *Czarina in Paris*. The Russian royal visit to Paris was evidently a momentous occasion, particularly as the Czar had been crowned only five months earlier. The state visit was even marketed in England as a tourist event, as one Croydon newspaper announcement shows:

Paris for the fetes in honour of the visit of H.I.M the Czar. – The Brighton Railway Co. are announcing that by their Newhaven, Dieppe, and Rouen route to Paris and the Continent, through the charming scenery of Normandy, to and from the Paris terminus, near the Madeleine, cheap 14-day return tickets from East Croydon on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, Oct. 3rd, 4th and 5th.²⁹

The fact that the Paris visit warranted this type of publicity in England gives us an insight into the enthusiasm and interest that was generated by the Czar's procession and the sensation it would have caused to see the event on film.

By incorporating the exotic into film programmes, audiences were given the opportunity to experience far-off lands and offered an insight into foreign societies that were not easily accessible to the majority of people in this period. As one reviewer acknowledged of *Japanese Dance*: 'the audience was spell-bound with astonishment, such a marvellous sight never having been seen by the largest portion of them'.³⁰ Even the relatively conventional *Skirt Dance* exhibited by Banks may have appeared rather exotic, particularly if the dancer was the infamous and sensational Annabelle. Although Langfrier's Velograph film programme included predominantly local Croydon or English scenes, one faux-exotic film was shown in the case of *Indian Skirt Dance* (although this was actually performed by a local artiste). The cinematograph was enabling suburban and seaside audiences to view the exotic and 'the other' from the comfort of a local and public space.

Film audiences in Croydon, Ealing and Woolwich were also offered a suburban-urban viewing experience, with several films rendering them access to the sophistication of urban life from the convenience and comfort of suburbia. Banks and Greaves and Phil and

²⁹ *CT*, 26 September 1896, p. 5.

³⁰ (*Guernsey Star*, 1 September 1896, p. 2.

Bernard exhibited street scenes, no doubt illustrating the hustle and bustle of the city, and Langfrier exhibited a film entitled *London Life* for a Croydon audience. Also in Croydon, Paul showed busy scenes of Blackfriars and Westminster Bridges featuring horse-drawn carriages, buses and pedestrians going about their day-to-day business. This leitmotif of the suburban-urban is broader than the film content alone as exhibitors such as Paul and Banks were quick to promote their London connections in advertisements, for example by highlighting their engagements at Olympia and the Alhambra.



Fig. 7.5 Still from *Blackfriars Bridge*, R.W. Paul 1896.

‘Blackfriars Bridge (1896) - R.W. Paul - BFI’, *YouTube*, 2015 <https://youtu.be/fABILtla_Ie> [accessed 29 September 2015]

In contrast to scenes of an urban nature, we also see the emergence of ‘local’ films. The Grand Kinematograph or Velograph is the best example of exhibiting local films for local people in its screening of films such as *Skaters at Morland Pond*; *Croydon Street Scenes*; *Demolition of East Croydon Station* and *Children Playing in Park Hill*. One can imagine the ripple of sensation amongst an audience seeing their home town and local places they were familiar with on screen, perhaps even having the fortune to catch a glimpse of themselves or someone they knew personally. There was also a sense of parochial pride that the apparatus was locally made: ‘It is gratifying to note that the entire apparatus – films, photographs, mechanism, and all – has been produced in Croydon, and that orders for supplies are being received from all over the world’.³¹ Films with a local significance could also extend to some of the films that Banks and Greaves were showing as part of their repertoire. *Beach in Summer Time* and *Rough Sea* would have resonated

³¹ CSG, 16 December 1896, p. 3.

with both locals and holidaymakers in the seaside areas in which they were shown. Although they were not intrinsically 'local' films, they nevertheless had a local significance as they featured a familiar space. Such films could provide a multi-sensory experience with the roar of the waves crashing, the hubbub of children on the beach, and the characteristic smells of the seaside being evoked from local observations.

The Cinema of Sensation is multi-layered and relates to the film subjects, the stimulation of the senses engendered by the films, a curiosity with objects being given life, and the physical sensation of viewing. In terms of how people engaged with the new medium of film, there was a communal relationship borne out of a shared, rather than solitary, viewing experience. By cautiously applying classical modes of spectatorship to the early film viewing experience, particularly Mulvey's reflections on the pleasure of watching films, we can perceive how this shared intimacy and immediacy could be heightened in a dark, defined viewing space. At the same time an awareness of other audience members was retained, and we can see connections with the format of spectatorship experienced during variety performances, particularly as films constituted short bursts of activity which mirrored the 'diversion' of the variety format.

The opportunity to see local places on film, as with Langfrier's cinematograph in Croydon, stimulated feelings of pride and wonder at seeing familiar spaces as well as the anticipation of recognising friends, family or even oneself on the screen. The sensational could also be experienced through the pomp and pageantry of royal celebrations and special occasions captured on film, as witnessed by the various recordings of the Russian Czar.

The sensation implied by the taglines and advertisements was more than a publicity tool because linguistically there was also an implicit suggestion of a physical stimulation of the senses. The viewer could also be stimulated by the excitement generated by the expectation of viewing a new technology combined with the uncertainty of what the film subjects would comprise. Although the films themselves were inherently silent, there would have been extraneous sounds in the viewing space such as the whirl and clatter of the cinematograph, the chatter of the audience, and the commentary of the exhibitor. This meant that the sensation of watching films in this early period could still be multi-sensory and all-encompassing. The films themselves could also tap into the idea of physical sensation and elemental force to illustrate the power of nature. Other key themes in terms of sensational subject matter were ethnography, exoticism and urban exploration, seen most clearly with Horace Banks' programme of films. Audiences were afforded access to different cultures and societies on a small scale, perhaps seeing a minute or two of exotic,

foreign or urban footage. This was effectively a form of mass geographical or cultural tourism: audiences could experience the sensation of urban or overseas life. The early film audiences were undertaking a voyage of discovery, one which not only stimulated their senses, but was also capable of taking them temporally and geographically to places they could only previously imagine.

A voyage of discovery

Having explored how the ethnographic was connected to the Cinema of Sensation, here I consider more closely the broader theme of travel: how it was reflected in the first film programmes and how it related to the concept of sensation. As a lecturer, Horace Banks was quick to incorporate animated pictures into his existing entertainment and was already experienced in taking his audiences on a virtual journey, while he adopted the role of narrator and guide. Although on first glance there was a disconnect between the subject-matter of his existing travelogue format and the new films he exhibited, more detailed probing reveals how they dovetailed neatly. The early film audiences were undertaking a tangible and figurative voyage of discovery: not only were they discovering a new technology in the shape of the cinematograph, but this apparatus had the capability to take them temporally and virtually to places that were previously accessible only through the power of imagination or more static visual and literary media. An exhibitor could also convey the suburban audience on a journey by means of transport scenes or films featuring seaside and overseas views. The cinematograph was a globalizing vehicle, affording viewers a window into unfamiliar and diverse places and cultures and reinforcing the impression that the world was compressing and becoming more accessible.

Along with other visual media such as lantern slides, stereoscopes and panoramas, the cinematograph offered suburban viewers a mechanism by which to escape their locale, gain access to the wider world and visually connect and interact with other cultures and places. 'Globalisation' became a mainstream socio-economic term from the 1960s onwards, and is associated particularly with financial markets, but the concept has existed for centuries in relation to the growth and development of global transport and trade links. It is also useful to apply the term to animated photography as the consumption of films outside of their country of production (for example an American Edison film exhibited in Britain) capitalised on the growing sense of global accessibility. Geographical horizons were being expanded by the advent of the cinematograph and I have already noted how William Courtney took advantage of Banks' dioramic entertainment to advertise immigration to New Zealand. It was a mutually beneficial arrangement as Courtney spoke

in the interval about business opportunities, whilst declaring Banks' pictures of New Zealand accurate. Courtney was in England to entice settlers to New Zealand, and a report in the *New Zealand Herald* at the end of the year shows that Courtney had been working hard in 1896 to encourage immigration:

Tomorrow a party of 99 immigrants will sail for New Zealand under the charge of Mr. William Courtney, who has put them together during the past few months. [...] they are, on the whole, the best class ever taken out by him, and are calculated in every way to prove valuable settlers and future colonists of New Zealand.³²

One wonders whether any members of the Jersey audience formed part of this colonization party, having been emboldened by Banks' entertainment and Courtney's advice to embark upon a new life overseas. In Ealing, Banks' international dioramic tours of 'England to America' and 'Picturesque New Zealand' were juxtaposed alongside local lantern slides, suggesting an interesting visual connection between the global and local. This connection was also apparent in contemporary print media as local newspapers such as *The Kentish Independent* frequently contained reports and editorials discussing world news and global affairs (far more so, in fact, than is noticeable in local newspapers today).

A number of films were exhibited in Croydon, Ealing and Woolwich in which the content also exuded a continental or broader international flavour. In Croydon, *The Paris Express* was shown in 1896, and the following year several French and Spanish Lumière films were presented. In Woolwich, Phil and Bernard included a smattering of continental films in their November 1896 programme, such as *Parisian Views*, *Czar of Russia at Paris* and *Coronation of the Czar of Russia*. A film such as *Niagara Falls*, shown by Banks in the Isle of Wight in 1897, brought a global touch to the proceedings, and even a staged performance such as Edison's *Japanese Dance* exuded the impression of a far-off land by constructing a quasi-ethnographic moment.

Horace Banks utilised slides, dioramic effects and animated pictures to offer audiences access to far-flung lands and different cultures through an integrated visual entertainment. Although the term 'travelogue' was not coined until after the turn of the century,³³ it is still fitting to employ it here as Banks' entertainment demonstrated an embryonic travelogue quality by virtue of the combination of his lecturing and his

³² *New Zealand Herald*, 23 December 1896, p. 6.

³³ Burton Holmes was an American traveller, lecturer, and showman. He professed to have coined the word 'travelogue' and claimed to be the first travel lecturer to integrate films into the format of his lectures. See Ellen Strain, *Public Places, Private Journeys: Ethnography, Entertainment, and the Tourist Gaze* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2009), p. 108.

selection of photographs and slides. The tours were local and international, featuring diverse places such as the Channel Islands, America and New Zealand. In *Public Places, Private Journeys* Ellen Strain notes that ‘travel lecturers spoke with the authority of firsthand experience’³⁴ and this was certainly true for Banks. He drew upon his personal experiences of his time spent in the navy and his adventures overseas. The lectures combined with the content of the dioramic slides created the feeling that the audience itself was being transported or conveyed on a journey by sea. Banks conducted his tour of ‘England to America’ in addition to animated photographs in Croydon in March 1897. *The Croydon Times* described the visual journey and, although the reviewer is referring here to still rather than animated photographs, the impression of movement is palpable nonetheless:

the large audience was taken on an imaginative journey across the herring pond and around the States of the almighty dollar all the views of interest en route were thrown upon the screen, some of which had been admirably transformed to the slide. The sights of the Niagara River were excellent, and the photographs of the world-famed fall itself, apart from its impressive roar, were quite sufficient to give a most natural idea of what it is really like.³⁵

In Woolwich, a ‘Wonders of the World’ lecture was given at the Polytechnic in November 1897. The lecture included dioramic views and an exhibition of animated photographs. Perhaps the film content mirrored the theme of the lecture, or it may be that the cinematograph was included as a wonder in its own right. In Croydon towards the end of 1896, animated pictures were exhibited alongside a Voyage to South Africa myriorama at the Public Hall. In each case the addition of animated pictures enhanced the existing entertainment format and worked in tandem to emphasise the themes of travel and movement, creating the sensation of being transported physically and imaginatively.

As well as helping to compress geographical and physical distance, animated pictures could also manipulate time by facilitating a form of time travel because they engendered the ability to see and experience the present and the recent past. One example of this was a news and sporting event such as Paul’s 1896 film *The Derby*, which effectively encapsulated both these states by being exhibited in London less than twenty-four hours after the event. Indeed, in 1895 Paul even toyed with the idea of an immersive sensory experience based on H.G. Wells’ novella *The Time Machine*, and was set to feature

³⁴ Strain, *Public Places*, p. 107.

³⁵ *CT*, 6 March 1897, p. 8.

moving pictures to create the sensation of travelling through space and time.³⁶ For suburban audiences films showing a bustling metropolis or overseas view also presented a temporary glimpse into the future, or a taste of what might be available with greater spending power and mobility. The steady march towards the *fin de siècle* also afforded a sense of reminiscence and nostalgia about the past as well as excitement and anticipation about the future: the cinematograph was capable of capturing such sensations at both ends of the spectrum.

Forms of transport were frequently included in the early film programmes and they signified the concept of travel in the purest and most tangible sense of the word, namely the ability to move physically from one place to another. Transport modes could embody the object of the viewing experience, allowing the audience to simply enjoy the visual movement of trains, trams and boats from a distance. Viewers also had the ability to imagine other people's journeys and watch them going about their business. An immersible experience was created by point-of-view films which enabled participation and interaction whilst emphasising the effect of being conveyed on a journey as the landscape flew past. One such Lumière film, shown at the Croydon Camera Club in December 1897, evidently caused a stir due to the sensation of movement:

Much interest was also shown in a scene taken from a railway carriage in motion, the view being of the flying landscape as seen through the carriage window. The effect produced was very remarkable, and when a turnpike road, which ran nearly parallel to the line of rails, came in sight, and on it was beheld a new woman astride a cycle, trying hard to race the train, the audience became uproariously delighted.³⁷

A film of a train arriving at a station, as shown by Banks in Ryde and Guernsey, and Paul in Croydon, allowed spectators to conjure up their own outing based on a fleeting image and to imagine the journey of the scurrying passengers caught on film. *The Flying Scotchman* was exhibited on the Velograph in Croydon in 1897, and even the title evokes the ideas of speed and the covering of distance. A view from the rear of a train may have been exhibited in Croydon that year by the Triograph, giving viewers a new sensation of watching their surroundings disperse rather than materialize as the train steamed towards its destination.

³⁶ Barnes, *vol. I*, pp. 38-41.

³⁷ *BJP*, 17 December 1897, p. 811.

When discussing the trope of travel within the early film shows, it is helpful to consider sociologist John Urry's concept of the tourist gaze. Urry discusses the development of the tourist gaze and the inherent visual character of tourism experiences and he posits that 'potential objects of the tourist gaze must be different in some way or other. They must be out of the ordinary. People must experience particularly distinct pleasures which involve different senses or are on a different scale from those typically encountered in everyday life'.³⁸ Perhaps the cinematograph itself could be described as an 'out of the ordinary' object enabling people to use their senses in a novel and different way to experience pleasure. Strain characterises the tourist gaze as the 'constant push and pull of distanced immersion' and 'the desire to be fully immersed in an environment yet literally or figuratively distanced from the scene in order to occupy a comfortable viewing position'.³⁹ This concept of distanced immersion can be seen with the early suburban film audiences who had the ability to adopt the role of 'tourist' from the comfort of suburbia and from within an enclosed and 'safe' environment such as a theatre or public hall. They could access 'out of the ordinary' scenes (such as *Japanese Dance* and *Niagara Falls*) and experience a sense of departure from the routine and humdrum of the everyday. On the other hand the film programmes I have traced also frequently included scenes of 'everyday life', and this was often alluded to in newspaper advertisements and reviews. Connected to this idea of the everyday, Urry considers the cultural critic and academic Dean MacCannell's interest in staged authenticity and how people's fascination with the work lives of others can be the object of the tourist gaze.⁴⁰ This seems particularly apt when considering labour-related films such as *Bootblack*, *Blacksmith Shop*, *Engineer's Shop* and *Blacksmith at Work* (all of which, incidentally, may have been staged).

Another stream of Urry's research concerns the rise and fall of the seaside, and the notion of the seaside as an object of the tourist gaze. Scenes of bustling beaches and rolling waves frequently took a starring role in the early films.⁴¹ Suburban viewers could be taken to the seaside remotely: through the medium of film they could now experience more explicitly the visual sensation of crashing waves and seaside amusements, whether they travelled to the coast or not. Tracking Horace Banks' tour of England has also shown the physical significance of seaside resorts to the annual exhibition strategy of a lantern lecturer. Coastal film exhibition was particularly influential during the summer months of

³⁸ John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), p. 12.

³⁹ Strain, *Public Places*, p. 27.

⁴⁰ Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, p. 9.

⁴¹ In Croydon and Woolwich several films were shown containing a seaside motif. We also know that Banks' programme around this time included *Beach in Summer Time* and *Rough Sea*. For names of films with a seaside theme see Appendices 2, 5 and 7.

1896 as animated pictures did not arrive in towns such as Ealing, Croydon and Woolwich until autumn that year. Consequently for some suburbanites their first film experience may have been during a holiday to the Channel Isles or Isle of Wight or a day trip to Folkestone, rather than in their own community. One can imagine people returning home during the summer of 1896 to regale friends and acquaintances with tales of the seaside and of a curious new machine called the cinematograph, piquing their interest before the 'sensation of the century' arrived in their home town. Conversely this also meant that residents of some seaside towns were afforded the opportunity to view films in their locality before the majority of their suburban counterparts. A lantern lecturer like Banks therefore played a crucial role in making the cinematograph accessible to people outside of London and the suburbs over the summer of 1896.

Exploring the early film-going experience has revealed the key theme of travel and the perception of undertaking or being taken on a journey through time and/or space, an imaginative journey that could sometimes be participatory and immersive. Physical, geographical and abstract connections between this theme and the cinema of sensations emerge in the films themselves and in their manner of exhibition. The idea of distanced immersion is striking as viewers could access a tourist experience from the comfort of suburbia and from within the safe confines of a public entertainment space. The viewer was encouraged to adopt the gaze of the tourist at objects and scenes that signified difference and the 'out-of-the-ordinary', a notion that can be extended to the cinematograph apparatus itself. Conversely, suburban views could also take pleasure in watching scenes of everyday and ordinary life, and the idea of staged authenticity was evident in films which emphasised industry and labour. As well as virtual and physical travel, time could be compressed and manipulated as images were captured in the past and consumed in the present. This fluidity of time can be linked to the improvements being made in the nineteenth century to transportation and communication, which enabled faster connections and interactions. The cinematograph thus offered a greater visual scope in a world in which horizons were already being expanded tangibly by developments in the areas of transportation and technology such as telegraphy, motor cars and trains. Cinematography was thus one means of engendering a new mode of global interaction and integration.

CONCLUSION

This expedition to late nineteenth-century Croydon, Ealing and Woolwich has enabled a detailed analysis of the launch of film exhibition in the suburbs. On our journey we have become acquainted with a number of different exhibitors, visited a range of venues and shared the experiences of audiences engaging with a new sensation for the first time. There have been some unexpected, but crucial, detours to the coast and further afield which have also served to re-position the role of the lanternist at the centre of exhibition culture. Exhibitors like Horace Banks have been reclaimed from the periphery – it is clear he and no doubt others like him performed a vital role which underpinned the early development of film exhibition outside of London and other large urban centres.

The research I have undertaken and the evidence I have found has enabled me to challenge some of the conclusions drawn by others about the nature of early film exhibition. The home of film in this period was not the music hall as has often been assumed. As I have shown in the case studies, the cinematograph was exhibited in a multitude of venues in suburbia, many of which were inherently instructive and cultural in nature and aimed at the middle-classes. The willingness of photographic clubs and other pedagogic institutions to embrace the cinematograph was crucial in terms of the frequency with which films were shown at a local level. Even when we have ventured out of suburbia to the coast and seaside resorts, we have seen that the cinematograph was often incorporated into an entertainment format that was instructive and refined, such as Banks' dioramic tours and concert parties.

In Croydon we saw by far the most frequent exhibition of films in any of the three suburbs, helped in part by the role of the local Camera Club which was responsible for a third of the film shows in this period. A thriving club membership, combined with the proactive organisation and running of the club, resulted in greater access to the latest developments in photography, and consequently cinematography. Bender and Langfrier were able to showcase their apparatus in front of fellow camera club members, as well as demonstrating their apparatus commercially in Croydon. Compared with Ealing and Woolwich, Croydonians were in the unique position of having a filmmaking company producing and exhibiting films locally. It was evident from reviews that once the novelty of the cinematograph began to diminish, the quality of the apparatus and the viewing experience became paramount. With a greater range of local entertainment venues in Croydon than in Ealing or Woolwich, we also saw how films could be used strategically in

response to local competition and how film shows could be specially arranged to coincide with seasonal or special events throughout the year.

In Ealing, on the other hand, we witnessed just a handful of film shows in this period. The cinematograph experienced a rather uncertain start in this suburban town, and it was regarded by one newspaper commentator as just an 'interesting experiment'. In fact, there was very little in the way of information recorded in the main local newspaper concerning the first film shows in the town, and this is emphasised by the limited data in Appendix 3.

I chose to research Woolwich as it provided a slightly different population composition to that found in Croydon and Ealing, which enabled me to consider whether there was any specificity of early film shows and their reception in relation to class in this period. Although Woolwich had a large working-class population, it does not appear that the films exhibited were especially tailored to the audiences or particularly distinctive in that regard. As with Ealing, we also see a rather muted response to the cinematograph in 1897, following the initial excitement of the first film shows in 1896.

I have identified twenty-five locations where Banks secured engagements in this period, and there may be others which are currently confined to the recesses of archives and newspapers. We now have a comprehensive chronology of where he toured in this period, the films he showed, the venues he used and how the Vivaceographe was received. The wealth of material I have uncovered so far has shown the impact that Horace Banks and the Vivaceographe had in this period. It is clear that he specialised in exhibiting in seaside resort towns, spending much of his time away from home and outside London. By taking the cinematograph to suburbia and the seaside, he gave many people their first experience of film. We have also seen how the Vivaceographe was advertised in the local and trade press, and how the public responded to this new technology and to the films it was capable of projecting. Banks was intrepid by nature and had an adventurous streak, but he was also a business man with a well-organised business model. He lined up his engagements months in advance, often making repeat visits each year, and he succeeded in integrating the Vivaceographe into his existing entertainment format. Although reviews were initially quite mixed concerning the Vivaceographe, he persevered rather than reverting to his old entertainment format. I like to think that he was ahead of the game and recognised that he had to make changes in order to keep his entertainment relevant.

I started my research in 2005: since then there have been many technological developments in the ability to make archival sources accessible. The volume of material available has grown exponentially as books, journals and newspapers have been digitised

and greater amounts of information and data have been made available on the internet. YouTube had only just been launched when I started my project, and now ten years later it is possible to watch a range of early silent film footage using a variety of media devices at home or even on the move. Although greater access to archival sources and material is of course a huge benefit, it also brings with it challenges concerning quality, relevance and choice. For an empirical film historian the wealth of information and data to sift through can be overwhelming. It is necessary to focus on what is relevant and eschew that which is not, but of course that involves making decisions about relevancy.

Researching early film exhibition has raised some interesting ideas for further research which could not be considered within the scope of this thesis. Perhaps the most important question it raises is what happened over the next decade or so after 1897? More research is required in order to see how film exhibition developed over the years at a suburban level in order to better comprehend the rise of penny gaffs and fixed-site cinema buildings outside London and how they worked with the suburban model, particularly when taking into account the predominantly middle-class audience base in the early years. It would also be valuable to consider the distinctiveness of London suburbs and to look at whether there were similar patterns of film exhibitions in provincial towns of a similar size, or in the suburbs of other large cities. In connection with this, the idea of Suburbia could be considered in a more abstract or conceptual way. In Croydon we saw the impact that a local filmmaking company had on the frequency of film exhibition, even in just a short period of two years, and it would be interesting to see how this developed over time in Croydon as well as in other suburbs with a filmmaking history.

On a more detail-focused level, there are still some questions that I would be keen to answer that have proved elusive so far. Who were Phil and Bernard – was this simply a stage name? From where did they hail? They were using a private hall in Maida Vale in 1897 to showcase their cinematographs but local street directories have no record of them in that period. What was their background and why did they decide to venture into the cinematography business? Where else did Horace Banks tour in this period, what other films did he show, and what type of apparatus was the Vivaceographe? My interest has also been piqued by Esmé Collings who did not stay in the filmmaking business very long, but whose films we often came across in these case studies.

My research is very specific in terms of early silent film exhibition since it focuses on the local, and on a very brief time-frame, but it should also be of interest to a wider set of scholarly communities outside of film studies as it engages with wider debates concerning social and economic history. For instance, my research has relevance to the

history of the suburbs, and to the development of late Victorian leisure, tourism and entertainment cultures and activities. In the field of film studies I hope this thesis will take its place alongside existing works by contributing new information and a greater understanding of how film exhibition was working at a local level. My case study of Horace Banks complements existing scholarship on key pioneers in this period, such as the work conducted by Patricia Cook on Albany Ward,¹ and by Frank Gray on Robert Paul, G. A. Smith and other filmmakers in the 'Brighton School'.² Extensive research has already been conducted by Vanessa Toulmin concerning travelling showmen and fairground showmen,³ as well as the role of Edwardian public hall showmen,⁴ and I believe my research and findings can be considered in conjunction with this body of work in order to develop a more nuanced understanding of film exhibition practices in England in the early silent period. Not only do I echo Jon Burrows' call to arms to consider the role of the public hall showmen in the Edwardian period,⁵ but I hope this thesis will also mobilise further research concerning the Victorian 'public hall' and 'pier pavilion' lanternists who were incorporating the cinematograph into an established entertainment programme. These individuals are crucial in attempting to piece together and understand how the public were consuming films in the Victorian period and how this laid the foundations for a film-going culture to emerge in the 1900s.

With a greater focus on the study of film exhibition in recent years, there has been a perceptible shift towards the value of undertaking detailed archival research, particularly in the local context, which I welcome. I hope I have shown that local empirical research has incredible value and can relate to broader discussions, and also help to shape our understanding of the national picture. It is a painstaking but very rewarding process and enables a much deeper understanding of how people were engaging with film. The hundreds of Croydonians who queued in stormy weather to see the Theatrograph in October 1896 can be brought to life again through a local history framework. Consequently we gain an insight into their motivations, their expectations and their experiences in relation to film. My research forms part of a body of work that explores local and regional exhibition practices, including the work conducted by Joe Kember, John Plunkett, Jill Sullivan and Rosalind Leveridge on the development of a visual and popular exhibition

¹ Cook, 'Albany Ward'.

² Gray, *The Hove Pioneers and the Arrival of Cinema*; Gray, 'The Sensation of the Century: Robert Paul and Film Exhibition in Brighton in 1896/97'; Gray, 'Smith the Showman'.

³ Toulmin, *Randall Williams: King of Showmen*; Toulmin, 'Telling the Tale: The History of the Fairground Bioscope Show and the Showmen Who Operated Them'.

⁴ Toulmin, 'Cuckoo in the Nest: Edwardian Itinerant Exhibition Practices and the Transition to Cinema in the United Kingdom from 1901 to 1906', *The Moving Image*, 10.1 (2010) 52-79.

⁵ Burrows, 'West is Best!'.

culture in the south-west of England.⁶ It can also be considered in tandem with American research, such as the study of the travelling exhibitor Lyman Howe,⁷ as well as the local-study framework applied by Greg Waller in his exploration of the emergence and reception of cinema in a small city in the American South.⁸

In terms of a broader perspective, Tom Gunning's concept of the Cinema of Attraction generated a new way of viewing and analysing early films in relation to the spectator and the image, and the legacy of the term and concept to the study of early film (and indeed much later film) cannot be overstated. Perhaps, however, it is time to consider a new way of analysing the experiences of the very first audiences and their engagement with film. My concept of the Cinema of Sensation seems more aligned and relevant to the audiences of 1896 and 1897, as shown by my research of suburban and seaside film shows and the sensations that were created when watching films. A large proportion of films mentioned in advertisements and reviews were aligned with the concept of the Cinema of Sensation – they encompassed ideas about ethnography, travel, speed, movement, and the extent to which images were 'life-like'.

On the one hand, there was the sensation of seeing some very unfamiliar and exotic subjects; and on the other hand, by screening very familiar subjects (the 'everyday'), they too were imbued with a touch of the sensational; by association, the familiar and mundane became significant and special. Despite a Victorian fascination with stillness and a desire to record death, audiences were also intrigued by the realism of subjects on screen and whether they appeared life-like or endowed with life. This was not a new fascination, but emerged from a long cultural history of inanimate objects coming to life in literature and art, and can also be seen in a range of performance activities around this time.

Research concerning silent film exhibition has often eschewed the pre-1900 period in favour of the Edwardian period. It is, after all, difficult to research the very beginnings of a new medium when that medium does not yet possess its own specific print culture concerning exhibitions, audiences and films, and is still in an organic process of development. This requires thinking creatively about sources, and sifting through local and national newspapers, memoirs, and photographic, electrical and entertainment journals. The work by John Barnes, therefore, has been a guiding light in terms of his style of research and the empirical and historical approach he took when researching the history of cinema in England. By taking a similar granular approach to my research, I have revealed

⁶ Leveridge, 'Limelights and Shadows'; Joe Kember, John Plunkett and Jill Sullivan, AHRC-funded project 'Moving and Projected Images in the South West, 1840–1914'.

⁷ Musser and Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures*.

⁸ Waller, *Main Street Amusements*.

long-forgotten and little-known films and exhibitors which tell us much about the beginnings of a film culture in England which continues to develop and evolve to the present day. Above all, in the style of Horace Banks, I hope that I have succeeded in guiding you on a tour of the first two years of film exhibition in suburbia, for your ‘edification, amusement, interest, instruction, and delight’.⁹

⁹ *JEP*, 18 October 1898, ‘Theatre Royal. Animated Pictures’. Article kindly provided by the Jersey Library.

APPENDIX 1: Film exhibition in Croydon 1896 & 1897

1896

Venue	Exhibitor	Apparatus	Date	Occasion
Horniman Hall	Unknown	Unknown ('Living Photographs')	30 September -3 October	Standalone exhibition
National Palace of Varieties	Robert Paul	Theatrograph	5-17 October	Grand Opening
Old School of Art Room	William Friese-Greene	Friese-Greene apparatus (unconfirmed)	2 December	Camera Club Meeting
Public Hall	Adolphe Langfier	Bender & Co., Grand Kinematograph	12-15 December	Bazaar & Charity Fundraiser
Public Hall	Bell's Realisations	'Edison's Kinematograph'	26 December 1896-2 January 1897	Festive entertainment

1897

Venue	Exhibitor	Apparatus	Date	Occasion
Braithwaite Hall	Hector Maclean on behalf of Adolphe Langfier	Grand Kinematograph	13 January	Camera Club Public Lantern Show
Theatre Royal	Adolphe Langfier	Grand Kinematograph	15 January	'Benefit' for Theatre Manager
Breadon House (unconfirmed)	Adolphe Langfier	Improved Grand Kinematograph	27 January	Camera Club Meeting
Theatre Royal	G. A Smith	Unknown	8 February for <i>circa</i> 2 weeks	Pantomime
Braithwaite Hall	David Prosser Roberts	Prosser Roberts Cinematograph	17 February	Camera Club Public Display
Public Hall	Banks and Greaves	Vivaceographe	4 March	Croydon Literary and Scientific Institution Entertainments at the Public Hall
Small Public Hall	Adolphe Langfier	Grand Kinematograph (unconfirmed)	24 March	Camera Club display for Croydon Hospital
National Palace of Varieties	Velograph Company	Velograph	2-14 August	August Bank Holiday
National Palace of Varieties	George Francis (unconfirmed)	Lumière Triograph	27 September – <i>c.</i> 9 October	Anniversary of the variety hall & opening of rival hall
Public Hall	G. P. Norman	Noakes and Norman Cinematograph	24 November	Croydon Microscopical & Natural History Club Soirée
Small Public Hall	H. Spencer Clarke (unconfirmed)	Cinématographe-Lumière	8 December	Camera Club Public Lantern Show (Nestlé & Lever Brothers)
Public Hall	Banks and Greaves	Vivaceographe	9 December	General entertainment
Empire Theatre of Varieties	Velograph Company	Velograph ('Langfior [<i>sic</i>] cinématographe')	27 December	Festive entertainment

APPENDIX 2: Films exhibited in Croydon in 1896 and 1897

This is a list of films that were specifically referred to within the context of Croydon exhibitions, either in advertisements or reviews. I have used primary source material from newspapers and photographic journals to compile this data.

2 (i) Films exhibited by R. W. Paul (Theatrograph)

Sources:

CT, 26 September 1896, p. 5.

CT, 7 October 1896, p5.

CC, 10 October 1896, p. 5.

CC, 17 October 1896, p. 5.

	Subject or Title	Month of Exhibition
1	The Derby of 1896 (The Prince's Derby)	October 1896
2	The Gardener Watering	October 1896
3	The Soldier's Courtship	October 1896
4	Westminster Bridge	October 1896
5	Blackfriars Bridge	October 1896
6	Henley Regatta	October 1896
7	Brighton Beach	October 1896
8	Professor Maskelyne	October 1896
9	Plate Spinney [Spinning]	October 1896
10	Paris Express	October 1896
11	Up the River	October 1896
12	Engineer's Shop	October 1896
13	Levant [Devant] Conjurer	October 1896
14	Ramsgate	October 1896
15	A Comic Race	October 1896
16	Trinity Hall Crew	October 1896
17	Queen's Park on Sunday	October 1896
18	Twins' Tea Party	October 1896
19	Victoria Park	October 1896

2 (ii) Films exhibited by William Friese-Greene (unconfirmed apparatus)

Sources:

BJP, 43.1910 (11 December 1896), p. 797.

CC, 5 December 1896, p. 5.

	Subject or Title	Month of Exhibition
1	The 1896 Lord Mayor's Show (Esmé Collings)	December 1896
2	The Broken Melody (Esmé Collings)	December 1896
3	Buffalo Bill (Edison)	December 1896
4	A Tub Race in the sea (possibly Edison)	December 1896
5	A Rough Day at Hastings (unknown)	December 1896
6	Rough waves breaking against sea wall (unconfirmed)	December 1896

2 (iii) Films exhibited by Adolphe Langfrier (Grand Kinematograph/Velograph)

Sources:

CSG, 16 December 1896, p. 5.

BJP, Vol. 44.1916 (22 January 1897), p. 61.

CSG, 3 February 1897, p. 15.

BJP, Vol. 44, No. 1918 (5 February 1897), p. 94.

CT, 31 July 1897, p. 4.

CT, 7 August 1897, p. 2.

Programme for the National Palace Theatre of Varieties, 9 August 1897, reprinted in Barnes, vol. 2, p. 194.

CT, 11 August 1897, p. 5.

	Subject or Title	Month of Exhibition
1	Park Hill Recreation Ground – children at play	December 1896
2	Demolition of East Croydon Station – wall falling / Demolition of Old Railway Station	December 1896 & January 1897
3	Hyde Park Corner – Horse Guards passing	December 1896
4	Old Fish Market at Hastings	December 1896
5	Croydon street scenes	December 1896
6	Ilfracombe, slowly breaking wave	December 1896
7	Demolition of Old Railway Station	January 1897
8	Yacht Landing Pleasure Party, Hastings	January 1897
9	Skaters at Morland Park Lake, Croydon	January 1897
10	Demolition of East Croydon Station	January 1897
11	Diamond Jubilee Procession	August 1897
12	State Garden Party (Queen and Royal Family), Buckingham Palace	August 1897
13	The Royal Regatta, Henley (1897)	August 1897
14	Derby (1897)	August 1897
15	Ascot Gold Cup (1897)	August 1897
16	The Flying Scotchman	August 1897
17	The Seaside	August 1897
18	Military Drill	August 1897
19	London Life	August 1897
20	Indian Skirt Dance – Miss Ida Baily	August 1897

2 (iv) Films exhibited during Bell's Realisations (Edison Kinematograph)

Sources:

CSG, 20 December 1896, p. 13.

	Subject or Title	Month of Exhibition
1	Sea-shore scene with fisher folk	December 1896

2 (v) Films exhibited Prosser Roberts (Prosser Roberts cinematograph)

Sources:

BJP, 26 February 1897, 44.1921, p. 141.

	Subject or Title	Month of Exhibition
1	The Railway Station	February 1897
2	Cycling	February 1897
3	Prismatic Skirt Dancer	February 1897
4	Church Parade	February 1897*

* *Church Parade* was shown by Prosser Roberts in Woolwich in February 1897, so it is likely it also formed part of his Croydon programme that month.

2 (vi) Films exhibited [by George Francis] (Lumière Triograph)

Sources:

CT, 29 September 1897, p. 8.

CSG, 29 September 1897, p. 13.

CSG, 6 October 1897, p. 12.

	Subject or Title	Month of Exhibition
1	Diamond Jubilee	September & October 1897
2	Military Steeplechase	September & October 1897
3	Waves breaking on a rock	September & October 1897
4	Cavalry charge	September & October 1897
5	Cavalry at jumping practice	September & October 1897

2 (vii) Films exhibited by G. P. Norman (Noakes and Norman Cinematograph)

Sources:

Proceedings & Transactions of the Croydon Microscopical & Natural History Club 1897-1898 (London: West, Newman & Co.), pp. 145-146.

	Subject or Title	Month of Exhibition
1	Royal Artillery in Jubilee Procession	Circa November 1897
2	Snowballing Incident	Circa November 1897

2 (viii) Films exhibited by Spencer Clarke (Cinématographe-Lumière)

Sources:

CSG, 14 December 1897, p. 5.

BJP, 44.1963 (17 December 1897), p. 811.

	Subject or Title	Month of Exhibition
1	View from window of express train	December 1897
2	The Fire Alarm	December 1897
3	The Visit of President Faure to the Czar	December 1897
4	The Bull Fight	December 1897
5	Jimmy on the Chute	December 1897
6	The Lost Cigar	December 1897

APPENDIX 3 (i): Film exhibition in Ealing 1896 & 1897

1896

Venue	Exhibitor	Apparatus	Date	Occasion
Lyric	Banks and Greaves	Vivaceographe	9 – 11 November	General entertainment

1897

Venue	Exhibitor	Apparatus	Date	Occasion
Victoria Hall	Unknown	Unknown	6 March	General entertainment
Burlington Studio	Watson and McCleery	Unknown	22 – 24 March	Private exhibition
Lyric	Unknown	Unknown	6 – 10 July	Diamond Jubilee Bazaar
Victoria Hall	Walter Cole	Unknown	15 – 16 October	General entertainment

APPENDIX 3 (ii): Films exhibited in Ealing in 1896 & 1897

Walter Cole

Walter Cole showed views of the Jubilee procession as part of his entertainment at the Victoria Hall in October 1897. The filmmaker is unknown.

Banks and Greaves

See Appendix 7 for a list of films that Horace Banks is known to have shown during 1896, and would have had access to in November 1896 in Ealing.

APPENDIX 4: Film Exhibition in Woolwich 1896 & 1897

1896

Venue	Exhibitor	Apparatus	Date	Occasion
Barnard's Theatre Royal	Phil & Bernard	Oscinematoscope	9 – 14 November	Variety entertainment
Woolwich Polytechnic	Unknown	Unknown	21 November	General entertainment
Barnard's Theatre Royal	Phil & Bernard	Oscinematoscope	23 – 28 November	Variety entertainment
Barnard's Theatre Royal	Phil & Bernard	Oscinematoscope	28 December – 2 January	Festive programme

1897

Venue	Exhibitor	Apparatus	Date	Occasion
Royal Artillery Theatre	Unknown	Animatographe	6 February	Variety entertainment
Royal Assembly Rooms	Joshua Dyson	Unknown	7 – 21 February	Variety entertainment
St. John's Schools Rooms	David Prosser Roberts	Prosser Roberts Cinematograph	25 – 27 February	Woolwich Photographic Society annual evening exhibition
Royal Assembly Rooms	Joshua Dyson	Unknown	17 – 22 May	Variety entertainment
Barnard's Theatre Royal	R. W. Paul	Theatrograph	14 – 26 June	Jubileetide
Woolwich Polytechnic	Mr. F. A. Gane	Unknown	20 November	Illustrative lecture

APPENDIX 5: Films exhibited in Woolwich in 1896 & 1897

(i) Films exhibited by Phil and Bernard, Barnard's Theatre Royal, November 1896

Sources:

WGKA, 6 November 1896, p. 5.

WGKA, 27 November 1896, p. 5.

	Subject or Title	Month of Exhibition	Venue
1	Parisian views	November 1896	Barnard's Theatre Royal
2	Children at play	November 1896	Barnard's Theatre Royal
3	The railway station	November 1896	Barnard's Theatre Royal
4	Coronation of Czar of Russia	November 1896	Barnard's Theatre Royal
5	Soldiers on the March	November 1896	Barnard's Theatre Royal
6	Lord Mayor's Show	November 1896	Barnard's Theatre Royal
7	Brighton Beach	November 1896	Barnard's Theatre Royal
8	Czar of Russia at Paris	November 1896	Barnard's Theatre Royal
9	Gouty Sportsman	November 1896	Barnard's Theatre Royal

Note: this is a list of films that were specifically referred to within the context of Woolwich exhibitions.

(ii) Films exhibited by Phil and Bernard in Chatham, November 1896

Note: This data shows the variety of films that Phil and Bernard were exhibiting in this period and it is likely that these films were also shown in Woolwich.

Source:

Chatham and Rochester News, 14 November 1896, p. 1.

	Subject or Title	Month of Exhibition	Venue
1	Street scene in Paris	November 1896	Barnard's Theatre Royal, Chatham
2	Railway Station	November 1896	Barnard's Theatre Royal, Chatham
3	Swimming and diving	November 1896	Barnard's Theatre Royal, Chatham
4	Boulevard scene - Hamstrung	November 1896	Barnard's Theatre Royal, Chatham
5	Blacksmith at work	November 1896	Barnard's Theatre Royal, Chatham
6	Coronation of the Czar	November 1896	Barnard's Theatre Royal, Chatham
7	Comic pictures	November 1896	Barnard's Theatre Royal, Chatham

(iii) Films exhibited at the Polytechnic (unknown exhibitor), November 1896

Source:

KICA, 28 November 1896, p. 4.

	Subject or Title	Month of Exhibition	Venue
1	Scene at Ilfracombe	November 1896	Polytechnic
2	Brighton Bank Holiday	November 1896	Polytechnic
3	Procession of Czar and Czarina through Paris	November 1896	Polytechnic

(iv) Films exhibited by Prosser Roberts, February 1897

Source:

KICA, 6 March 1897, p. 5.

	Subject or Title	Month of Exhibition	Venue
1	Railway Station	February 1897	St John's Schools rooms (Woolwich Photographic Society)
2	Church Parade	February 1897	St John's Schools rooms (Woolwich Photographic Society)

Note: It is likely that Prosser Roberts also exhibited *Cycling* and *Skirt Dancer*, as these films were shown by him in Croydon the previous week.¹

¹ *BJP*, 44.1921 (26 February 1897), p. 141.

Appendix 6: Horace Banks' tour of Britain, 1896-1897

1896

Location	Type of venue	Month and date, where known
Olympia	Pleasure resort	Circa 16 – 27 June
Folkestone	Theatre	29 June – 4 July
Aberystwyth	Pier pavilion	20 – 25 July
Olympia	Pleasure resort	Circa 3 August
Southend-on-Sea	Pier pavilion	17 – 22 August
Jersey	Park pavilion	25 August – 29 August
Guernsey	Hall	31 August – 1 September
Ventnor	Seafront pavilion	3 – 5 September
Sandown	Pier pavilion	7 – 9 September
Ryde	Pier pavilion	10 – 12 September
Brixton	Hall	6 – 10 October
Romford	Corn Exchange	22 October
Ealing	Variety hall	9 – 11 November
Canterbury	Theatre	30 November – circa 2 December
Swindon	Corn Exchange	26 December – circa 2 January

1897

Location	Type of venue	Month and date, where known
Guildhall	Historic hall	12 January
Croydon	Public hall	4 March
Southsea	Pier pavilion	1 & 3 May
Worthing	Pier pavilion	Circa 19-24 July
Bognor	Theatre	2-7 August
Rhyl	Pier pavilion	Circa 16-21 August
Worthing	Pier pavilion	Circa 23-28 August
Ventnor	Seafront pavilion	13–18 September
St Leonards	Pier pavilion	8 November – circa 20 November
Croydon	Public hall	9 December
Chesterfield	Memorial hall	27 & 28 December

Appendix 7: Films exhibited by Horace Banks, 1896 & 1897

The films are listed in chronological order, based on their first known exhibition by Banks.

	Subject or title of film	First known exhibition by Banks	Subsequent exhibitions
1	Skirt dancer	June 1896 - Folkestone	Jersey Guernsey (Ryde)* Canterbury Southsea
2	Bootblacks	June 1896 - Folkestone	
3	Fencers	June 1896 - Folkestone	
4	Street scene	August 1896 - Jersey	Ryde
5	Japanese dance	August 1896 - Guernsey	(Ryde)*
6	Blacksmith's shop	August 1896 - Guernsey	
7	Beach in summer time	August 1896 - Guernsey	
8	Arrival of train at station	August 1896 - Guernsey	Ryde Southsea
9	Rough sea (at Brighton)	December 1896 - Canterbury	Southsea
10	Sailors at Gun Drill	May 1897 - Southsea	
11	Ferry boat landing passengers at Portsmouth	May 1897 - Southsea	
12	Paddock scene, Gatwick	May 1897 - Southsea	

13	Workmen leaving dockyard, Portsmouth	May 1897 - Southsea	
14	Carpenters' workshop, shavings catch fire	May 1897 - Southsea	
15	Street fight	May 1897 - Southsea	
16	Bank Holiday in Brighton	May 1897 - Southsea	
17	Man diving	May 1897 - Southsea	
18	Czar entering Paris	May 1897 - Southsea	
19	Niagara Falls	August 1897 - Ventnor	
20	Queen's Diamond Jubilee Procession	August 1897 - Ventnor	Rhyl St Leonards

* The Ryde press review simply mentioned 'dancers' so it is not clear whether this was a reference to *Japanese Dance* or *Skirt Dance*, or both films.

Abbreviations

The Aberystwyth Observer (AO)
Brighton Gazette (BG)
British Journal of Photography (BJP)
The Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers' Gazette (Cambrian News)
The Croydon Advertiser and Surrey County Reporter (CA)
The Croydon Chronicle and East Surrey Advertiser (CC)
Croydon Guardian and Surrey County Gazette (CG)
Croydon Society Gossip/Croydon and Surrey Gossip (CSG)
The Croydon Times (CT)
Daily Chronicle and Clerkenwell News (Daily Chronicle)
The Electrical Engineer (EE)
The Folkestone Herald (FH)
The Folkestone Programme and Weekly Review (FP)
The Guernsey Evening Press (GEP)
Guernsey Times (GT)
Guernsey Advertiser and Weekly Chronicle (GAWC)
Hastings, St. Leonards and Bexhill Amusements and Visitors' Guide (Hastings Amusements)
Hastings and St Leonards Chronicle (HLC)
Hastings and St Leonards Observer (HLO)
Hastings and St Leonards Advertiser (HLA)
Isle of Wight Advertiser (IWA)
Isle of Wight Chronicle (IWC)
Isle of Wight County Press and South of England Reporter (County Press)
Isle of Wight Mercury (IWM)
The Isle of Wight Observer (IWO)
Jersey Express and Channel Islands Advertiser (JEA)
Jersey Evening Post (JEP)
Jersey Times and British Press (JT)
Kentish Gazette and Canterbury Press (KG)
The Kentish Independent and County Advertiser (KICA)
The Middlesex County Times (MCT)
The Optical Magic Lantern Journal and Photographic Enlarger (OMLJ)
The Photographic Dealer and D. & P. Trade Review (Photographic Dealer)
The Portsmouth Evening News (PEN)
The Swindon Advertiser, Wilts, Berks and Glo'ster Chronicle (Swindon Advertiser)
Woolwich Gazette and Kentish Advertiser (WGKA)

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Sections

1. Primary sources
2. Suburbia and seaside
3. Victorian and Edwardian society and culture
4. Local and national studies
5. Archaeology of the cinema
6. General secondary literature on silent cinema
7. Early film production
8. Early film exhibition
9. Film audiences and reception
10. Recommended collections of silent films available on DVD
11. Contextual reading

Although it is beneficial to separate this bibliography into thematic sections, there will be some overlap as there are not always rigid distinctions between the themes.

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Croydon Society Gossip/Croydon and Surrey Gossip

The Croydon Times

Daily Chronicle and Clerkenwell News

The Daily News

The Derbyshire Times and Chesterfield Herald

The Essex County Chronicle

The Folkestone Herald

The Folkestone Programme and Weekly Review

Folkestone Up To Date

The Graphic

The Guernsey Evening Press

Guernsey Times

Guernsey Advertiser and Weekly Chronicle

Hastings, St. Leonards and Bexhill Amusements and Visitors' Guide

Hastings and St Leonards Chronicle

The Hastings and St Leonards News

Hastings and St Leonards Observer

Hastings and St Leonards Advertiser

Indianapolis Journal

Isle of Wight Advertiser
Isle of Wight Chronicle
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Isle of Wight Guardian
Isle of Wight Mercury
The Isle of Wight Observer
Jersey Express and Channel Islands Advertiser
Jersey Evening Post
Jersey Times and British Press
Kent Herald
Kentish Gazette and Canterbury Press
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